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Relative Care Provider Outreach Project

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Final Report

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Relative Care Outreach Project: Final Report

Introduction

The research to date is very clear that the quality of the environments in which children grow, develop and learn have an enormous impact on their entire life (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000; Greenough, Gunnar, Emde, Massinga, & Shankoff, 2001). Additionally, research informs families and professionals that a large percentage of childcare environments, including family home settings, rate low on overall quality, which can have life long impacts on the child (Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; NICHD, in press). Although many variables come into play, it is important to understand the factors involved in this low rating when relatives are providing the daily care for the child.

Vandell and Wolfe's (2001) Executive Summary stated that "Regulated home childcare providers had less education and training: 34 percent had no schooling beyond high school and only about two-thirds had received any in-service training" (p. 5). Literature-based information regarding unregulated childcare is not as easy to find. It is assumed, however, that it, too, lacks the training, resource information, and support needed by the childcare providers. It is known that quality of childcare improves when there is support and training for the providers (Emde, 2001).

Additionally, with the advanced knowledge of the impact of nurture on the developing brain (Diamond & Hopson, 1998; Shore, 1997), it is critical that information and training be provided to family members, including relative care providers, who care for their young ones in home settings as soon as possible. No longer can family members, or

professionals, simply make a wish upon a star, or cross their fingers, in hopes that the baby will turn out all right.

The Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (KACCRRRA) is committed to improving the quality of relative childcare in Kansas. Kansas has a large pool of unregulated childcare providers who receive no training or support. Therefore, the goal of the project was to provide initial information, through personal contacts, to relative care providers (RCPs) in Kansas. By developing a project that reached out to relative care providers, KACCRRRA offered information, materials, and a contact person to help build knowledge and skills important to the developing child in his/her care. It is the belief of KACCRRRA that these beginning contacts will open doors to ongoing relationships that will, ultimately, improve the quality of childcare in relative care settings.

This final report offers (a) a detailed description of the project, (b) participants in the project, (c) distribution areas, (d) quantitative findings, (e) qualitative findings, and (f) final discussions and recommendations.

Description of the Relative Care Outreach Project

The Relative Care Outreach Project sought to meet the needs of families who used relative care as their choice for childcare. The Project included the identification of relatives providing childcare to a member or members of their family, contacting each of the RCPs by an initial letter, followed by telephone calls, and offering to bring a childcare gift package to their home. Each childcare gift package included a children's book, an Infant/Toddler Project pen or pencil, flyers on childcare tips, a checklist of health and safety issues, electrical outlet covers, a book about how to become a licensed family child care

provider, and a local resource and referral training calendar. The childcare gift packages were then hand delivered to each of the RCPs requesting the same.

Once at the RCP's home, individual project professionals (PPs) would visit about the daily routines of childcare offered by the RCPs. The PPs would discuss child development, developmentally appropriate activities, and other topics of interest to the RCPs. In addition, the PPs would encourage the RCPs to talk about their needs and offer information about the Resource and Referral Agency, including how to use the resource library or locate training opportunities. For any specific requests, the PPs would follow-up with the RCPs.

Participants in the Project

The Project utilized 18 early care and education professionals from 16 existing childcare resource and referral agencies across Kansas to contact and distribute childcare gift packages to relative care providers. Before beginning the Relative Care Provider Outreach Project, the Project Professionals attended a 2-day educational workshop on how to provide effective technical assistance. KACCRRRA provided a list of relative care providers (1,249 individuals were identified by the Social Rehabilitation Services of Kansas) that included their names and last known addresses and telephone numbers to each of the 18 project professionals (PPs). The PPs sent initial letters to each of the RCPs informing them of the project and seeking their approval for a home visit to give them the childcare gift package. Follow up for each RCP was done by either telephone calls received from or made to the RCPs. A data tracking system was kept by each professional, which included the number of contacts, successful deliveries of the child care gift packages to the RCP at their home, or to another individual present at the home at time of delivery.

Additional information was tracked regarding whether or not the professional was invited to enter the home to discuss child care issues, the types of information requested, and to seek whether or not the RCP would be interested in child care trainings in the future.

Professionals filled out a Relative Care Outreach Project Contact Survey form providing both quantitative and qualitative information to an outside research consultant. Additionally, self-addressed, stamped postcards were included in the childcare gift packages asking the RCPs to evaluate their overall satisfaction with the project and return them to the outside research consultant.

Distribution Areas of the Project

The project professionals covered all of the 105 counties in Kansas. This included the very rural areas of western Kansas, the large urban areas such as Wichita and Kansas City, and the moderately populated areas in central, southeastern and northeastern areas.

Findings

In order to identify whether or not the Project met its initial goal, an outside research consultant evaluated the Relative Care Outreach Project Contact Surveys and RCP postcard evaluations. Findings include both quantitative and qualitative information.

Quantitative Findings

Project professional survey data. The Relative Care Outreach Project Contact Surveys included 12 questions requesting numerical answers (see Appendix A for the survey). Data included numbers of individuals assigned to contact, numbers of successful deliveries of the child care gift packages, and numbers of RCPs seeking additional, specific information, and their desire for additional childcare training. Table 1 provides the childcare gift package delivery information obtained from the surveys. Project

Table 1.

Relative Care Provider Child Care Gift Package Delivery Success

Agency Participants	No of RCPs assigned for contact	RCPs – called to get pkgs	No. of follow up PPs contacts	No. of pkgs delivered	% of Possible Pkgs delivered	% of RCPs seeking Contact
A	42	6	42	6	14%	14%
B	167	13	53	11	7%	8%
C	26	2	48	1	4%	8%
D	61	3	33	33	54%	5%
E	33	1	22	13	39%	3%
F	80	5	33	12	15%	6%
G	27	0	54	0	0%	0%
H	16	1	5	3	19%	6%
I	32	5	--	12	38%	16%
J	121	0	116	68	56%	0%
K	10	0	32	4	40%	0%
L	218	14	278	53	24%	6%
M	13	5	12	13	100%	38%
N	244	41	122	68	29%	17%
O	86	4	56	1	1%	5%
P	73	2	32	17	23%	3%
Totals	1249	102	938	315	29%	8%

professionals identified which RCPs to deliver the childcare gift packages to by either contacts received by the RCPs following receipt of the initial letters or through follow-up letters and/or phone calls made by the PPs to the RCPs.

A total of 315 childcare gift packages were delivered to either the RCP him/herself, or another individual in the home of the RCP. As result of this Project, 29% of the RCPs identified by SRS now have additional information that could impact the quality of childcare in their homes. Although the Project wanted to reach a higher percentage, qualitative feedback provides answers as to why the percentage of deliveries was not higher, as well as additional successes of the Project.

For almost all 18 PPs, the data reports that there were high numbers of follow-up contacts to the RCPs following the initial letter. It is more than likely that the 29% success rate was due to these follow-up contacts. This information is important to future endeavors by KACCRRRA. [If real differences are to be made for young children in Kansas, persistence must be a part of all projects.]

Relative childcare provider project evaluation. All RCPs participating in this project were provided an opportunity to contribute their feedback regarding the helpfulness of the Project to each of them individually. Postcard evaluations (see Appendix B) were provided to each of the RCPs who received a childcare gift package. Of the possible 315 RCPs who received evaluation postcards, which were stamped and self-addressed to the outside research consultant, 30 were returned for an approximate 10% return rate.

Of the 30 RCPs who returned the evaluation cards, 4 stated they had not received a letter in advance telling them about the Project (13%), while 26 RCPs (87%) stated they

had received the advance letter. Only 3 (10%) of the RCPs stated they did not receive a telephone call setting a time to deliver the childcare gift package.

When asked if the RCPs found the items in the childcare gift package helpful to them, all 30 (100%) reported yes, that the items were helpful. This evaluation item was one that was key to determining whether or not this Project successfully met its goal.

Finally, RCPs were asked if they sought any additional help from their PP and, if so, whether or not they received the help for which they asked. Out of the 30 RCPs, 4 (13%) stated they did ask for and received the additional information they needed; 1 (3%) asked for help, but stated he/she did not get the help she asked for (regarding the topic of head lice); and 25 (84%) did not ask for any additional help. Three of the RCPs who participated in the evaluations provided extra information by writing it on the postcard. This information is shared in the qualitative findings.

Qualitative Findings

The Relative Care Outreach Contact Surveys provided information that went beyond the numbers. Project Professionals provided their perspectives regarding (a) the RCP responses when the child care gift packages were delivered; (b) whether or not they were invited into the home to talk about child care; (c) the type of child care issues discussed with the RCPs; (d) challenges to delivering the child care gift packages; (e) the type of referral information requested by the RCPs; (f) the types of materials provided to the RCPs in follow-up visits; (g) whether they wanted additional training and, if so, what type of training, (h); strengths of the project and (i) other information, as obtained, on an individual basis.

Relative care providers responses to the gift packages. Almost all of the responses by the RCPs (or other family members receiving the childcare gift package) were positive. Project providers stated that most of the visits were “pleasant and enjoyable”, “warm and friendly”, or “receptive and appreciative.” The PPs stated they enjoyed visiting with the RCPs about their children. Three of the RCPs who returned evaluation postcards wrote a note of thanks in addition to the written information provided by the PPs.

Project professionals stated there were times when the conversations were short and more neutral. This was, usually, when the RCPs were unsure of the agency/person delivering the package, but they still wanted the gift. There were some RCPs who did not want the professionals in their homes and appeared inconvenienced by the calls or drop-bys to their homes. Three of the RCPs stated that they felt this was a ploy of SRS in order to check up on them. Persistence of the PPs, as well as good communication skills did turn some of the more negative experiences into positive experiences, according to the PPs surveys.

Invitations to enter the home to visit about child care issues. All PPs were asked whether or not they were invited into the RCPs’ homes to visit about their childcare issues. Eleven of the 16 surveys (69%) indicated that they were not invited inside the home of, at least, one or more of the RCPs homes. Indications to explain why they were not invited into the home included comments like “...they were unsure what agency I represented”, “I did have a provider that did not invite me to enter her home and threatened me that she would let her dog bite me”, or “Some of the homes were intimidating by the adults, not the kids.” A few of the PPs offered that the RCPs confused

them with working for SRS: “One of the providers I visited even indicated she initially thought she was being checked up on by the SRS”, “they thanked [me] for the gift...wanted me to get her SRS assistance back”, or “We had one provider that was very concerned that we were trying to check up on him for SRS.” These statements may be indicative of barriers built by past experiences and not by this Project.

Eleven of the surveys (69%) indicated that they were afforded the opportunity to enter at least one or more of the RCPs’ homes to visit about childcare issues. A few indicated that the offer was not made at first, but after some discussion and clarification as to what and whom they represented, they were allowed to enter the homes. Once the PP entered the home, data indicated very positive results. Examples include “...all were pleasant and enjoyable...they thanked me for the book and for bringing it to them”, “Many of the relative care providers were very positive and open to talk with me”, “Most invited us into the home and were friendly and hospitable”, “I was invited into each home and had some wonderful conversations with...the families”, “...they welcomed the company and adult interaction”, “...the relative care providers welcomed me into their home to discuss the rewards and challenges of relative care”, and “We had some that were a little apprehensive, but relaxed when they knew that we weren’t trying to intrude.” The PPs stated that once inside the homes of the RCPs, they gained valuable information about the RCPs interests, strengths, and needs.

Types of Child Care Issues of Interest to the Relative Care Providers. The RCPs talked to the PPs about a variety of issues of interest to them. Some of the issues were in common across the RCPs, while others were a one-time, but important, issue. Table 2

provides an organized view of the issues brought up by the RCPs and the number of times it was discussed across the RCPs.

Table 2.

Relative Care Provider Childcare Issues

Issues	No. of Times Discussed
Safety	2
Health	1
Child Appropriate Behaviors/Development	2
Problem/Challenging Behaviors	5
Discipline	5
Family Taking Advantage of Them as Child Care Providers	1
Family Issues (General)	1
Child Care Licensing	2
Privacy Issues	1
Need for Adult Interaction	1
Environmental Issues (not specified)	1
Violence in the Community	1
Children with Disabilities	1
Parenting Issues for At-Risk Families	1
Potty Training	1
Finding Affordable, Quality Childcare	1

Challenges to Delivering the Child Care Gift Packages. Numerous barriers to reaching and/or delivering the childcare gift packages were provided by the PPs in the surveys. Examples included being provided old/incorrect contact information to no one answering doors, once the visit was set. Table 3 provides more detailed information, including the number of times the barrier was mentioned by one of the PPs. There were indications by some of the surveys that persistence was key to successful deliveries.

Referral Information Requested by the RCPs. Only 12 of the RCP participants who accepted/received a childcare gift package requested referral information. The

referrals requested were for (a) stopping head lice, (b) instructions for making home-made play dough, (c) how to become a licensed childcare provider, (d) specific community resource agencies, (e) a resource for stopping a child from biting, and (f) a resource on potty training.

Table 3.

Challenges to Delivering the Childcare Gift Packages

<u>Challenges</u>	<u>No. of Times Mentioned</u>
Finding the address in the neighborhood	1
Scary/unsafe neighborhoods	3
No one answered the door/ Not home	4
Dogs barking at you (couldn't get to door)	1
Providers not calling back or responding to letters	4
The RCP had no phone number, disconnected phones, or no clear address	6
Fear that the PP represented SRS in some way	1
The distance/mileage it took to deliver the package (time consuming)	2
Not Appropriate for RCP (children in care were older)	1
RCP was no longer doing childcare	2
RCP was not interested in the service at all	1
Rapid turnover of RCPs	1

Materials Delivered in Follow-up Visits to RCPs. Materials requested and delivered in follow-up visits was quite extensive. Thirteen of the possible 16 professional agencies reported they had at least one or more of the RCPs asking for additional materials. Examples of what the RCPs requested included (a) low cost things to do with children, (b) child development information, like milestones or tip sheets, (c) materials regarding head lice, (d) positive guidance techniques (referred to as discipline techniques by RCPs), (e) how to pursue a childcare license, (f) reading activities, (g) information about disabilities, (h) health, (i) safety, (j) how to potty train a child, and (k) a list of preschools in the area.

Additional training. The PPs visited with the RCPs about their interest in obtaining additional training throughout the year. Out of the 16 surveys, 5 recorded positive responses to wanting additional training. Although most were not sure which training they would pursue, 2 of the 5 RCPs did request specific training; one on first aid and CPR, and one on how to get licensed. There was, also, one other survey that indicated possible interest in additional training in the future.

Strengths of the Project. Project professionals provided their own perspectives on the strengths of this Project. These included (a) the one-to-one contact made between the professionals and family members developed new, trusting relationships, (b) that the RCPs are now aware of the positive help that can be provided to them, (c) those that were visited are more open to continued connections, (d) increased awareness of childcare issues by the RCPs, (e) that the project was done in a non-threatening way, (f) that RCPs now know there are agencies in the community that want to support them, (g) acknowledgement of the RCPs self-worth, and (h) the interest and pursuit by some of the RCPs to become licensed childcare providers or to earn their CDA.

Other Information. There were some additional comments made by a few of the RCPs and PPs on the surveys or postcards that did not fit into the above named categories. Examples included concerns by the PPs about the safety of the children in some of the RCPs's homes. One RCP wondered whether or not SRS visited the homes of the RCPs before offering to pay for the childcare, as their perception was that the homes were very unsafe for children. There were other RCPs that reported positive outcomes, like the contacts made by the RCPs to obtain additional resources and/or information that did not exist before.

Summary and Recommendations for the Future

Relative care providers are a vital resource for families seeking quality, affordable, and convenient childcare while they work to provide a secure financial base for the family. However, there is a currently a lack of information and training for many of the RCPs providing care for young, developing children. Stepping up to this challenge, and with the help of the Kansas Health Foundation, the Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies designed a Project to begin to meet this need.

Was the *Relative Care Provider Outreach Project* a success? Based on the professional participants' and relative care provider participants' perspectives, the answer is "Yes". There are now 315 childcare homes with additional information/materials in their hands, a person to contact, a way to obtain information/materials in the future, and a new or renewed sense that agencies within their communities recognize their contributions. Time will tell whether or not this Project will continue to make a difference into the future. It is recommended that a follow up survey be provided to both the PPs and RCPs in this project to evaluate the long-term outcomes of the project.

Were lessons learned to offer to agencies and Relative Care Providers in the future of how a Project like this can be more successful? Again, the answer is "Yes". Some of those recommendations, added to ones from the literature, are offered as follows:

- Have professionals be persistent in contacting relative care providers to explain their purpose and encourage face-to-face contacts.
- Offer choices of how the gift packages, materials, or information can be obtained without a home visit, which may eliminate some of the fears of the RCPs that they have from past experiences with professionals; or of the PPs in going into violent neighborhoods.
- Work collaboratively with professionals from SRS to identify RCPs and work together to help empower them in providing quality childcare.
- Keep accurate data/registries on the relative care providers within each community, so professionals do not spend extraordinary amounts of time hunting them down.
- Continue to contact the relative care providers in nonintrusive ways to provide additional resources, information, and materials.
- Ask the relative care providers what materials and information would be helpful to them. Then, be responsive.
- Develop trust and rapport with relative care providers in order to ensure future partnerships with them.
- To encourage attendance at follow up trainings within the RCPs communities, tie it into existing routines (e.g., church activities, library activities, cultural

activities, or other trainings they are currently attending), schedule it during convenient times, and offer tokens of gratitude (e.g., toys, household items, like soap, or food).

It is imperative that public and private agencies invest in the quality of childcare in the United States. To do otherwise would be detrimental to the developing minds and bodies of millions of our children. This task seems daunting when viewed from a broad perspective. However, a difference can be made, just as this Project demonstrates, if implemented on a smaller scale. Because of the support of the Kansas Health Foundation and the commitment by the Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 315 families have been reached to begin making a difference in the lives of young children.

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Appendix A

Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

Relative Care Outreach Project Contact Survey

Section I: General Information

- Name: _____
- Agency Name and Phone Number: _____

- Counties Assigned to Serve: _____

Section II: Relative Care Provider Contact Information

- Number of relative care providers assigned for contact: _____
- Number of relative care providers to whom you sent the initial contact letter? _____
- Number of relative care providers who contacted you about receiving a visit? _____
- Number of relative care providers you contacted to set up a visit? _____
- Number of follow-up contacts you made to reach the child care providers? _____
- Number of child care gift packages distributed in person: _____
- Number of care packages left at a relative care provider's home, but not with the relative care provider in person: _____
- Were you invited to enter the home and discuss child care issues with the relative care provider(s)? _____ Yes _____ No
- Please describe the responses over all of the relative care providers when the package was delivered (e.g., positive, neutral, negative). Please describe in your own words and, feel free to use additional paper, if needed: _____

- If you were able to discuss child care issues with the relative care provider further, what issues were important to him/her? _____

- Challenges to delivering care packages (Please describe in your own words): _____

- What is your perception as to the strength(s) of this project (Please describe in your own words): _____

Section III: Referral Requests

- How many times were you asked about referral information at the time you delivered the child care gift package? _____
- How many times were you contacted at a later time to request referral information? _____
- What type of referral information was requested? _____

Section IV: Follow-up/Requests for Technical Assistance

- Were follow-up materials mailed or taken to the relative care provider in response to meeting their needs? _____ Yes _____ No
- If yes, what types of materials were provided: _____
- Number of relative care providers interested in attending training sessions in the future on child care issues? _____

Section V: Additional Information

In this section, please provide any further information you feel is important about participating in this project:

Appendix B

Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

Relative Child Care Outreach Project

Thank you for participating in our Relative Child Care Outreach Project. Would you please take a few moments to help us know if this project was helpful to you by answering the following questions (by putting an “X” beside your answer) and dropping this post card in the mail.

- Did you get a letter about this project before someone called you? __Yes __No
- Did someone call you to set a time to deliver your childcare package? __Yes __No
- Did you find the items in the child care gift package helpful to you? __Yes __No
- Did you ask for any additional help from your visitor? __Yes __No
- If so, did you get the help you asked for? __Yes __No

Thank you for taking the time to provide us with these thoughtful answers.

Organizations involved in the Relative Care Provider Outreach Project:

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Kansas Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies network

Care Connection
Child Care Association of Wichita/Sedgwick County
Child Care Association of Johnson County
Child Care Focus: Resource and Referral
Child Care Links
Cloud Co Community College Resource and Referral
Colby Community College Resource and Referral
Dodge City Community College Resource and Referral
Douglas County Child Development Association
East Central Kansas Resource and Referral
ERC Resource and Referral
Flint Hills Resource and Referral
Hays Area Children's Center
Heart of America Family Services
Noah's Ark Child Care Resource and Referral
YMCA of Salina Resource and Referral

Garden City
Wichita
Overland Park
Parsons
Hutchinson
Concordia
Colby
Dodge City
Lawrence
Emporia
Topeka
Manhattan
Hays
Kansas City
Chanute
Salina