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National Evaluation of the Safe Kids/Safe Streets Program: Final Report

Executive Summary

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Many studies suggest that child abuse and neglect are risk factors for the development of juvenile delinquency and other problem behaviors. The Safe Kids/Safe Streets (SK/SS) program is designed to break the cycle by funding community collaboratives to undertake comprehensive, community-wide efforts to reduce child abuse and neglect. SK/SS is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs (OJP). Three offices within OJP—the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Executive Office for Weed & Seed (EOWS), and Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)—funded the participating sites and jointly monitored them, with OJJDP providing overall coordination.¹

OJP selected five localities to implement the SK/SS program, which began in 1997. Three grantees were in mid-sized cities (Huntsville, Alabama; Kansas City, Missouri; and Toledo, Ohio), one in a rural area (Burlington, Vermont), and one in a Tribal area (Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan). Initial awards for the first 18 months ranged from \$425,000 for the rural and Tribal sites to \$800,000 for Huntsville and \$923,645 for Kansas City. Unlike the other sites, Toledo received \$125,000 in “seed money” to encourage promising activities already underway in the community. After the first 18 months, sites were expected to receive four more awards, each covering a year, for a total project period of 5½ years. OJP did not hold projects to a strict timetable, however. In 2003, OJP decided to provide an additional \$125,000 per site to cover a final year of transition to non-Federal funding. All sites were still receiving SK/SS funds as of June 2004.

This four-volume report describes the results of Westat’s national evaluation of SK/SS, which examined planning and implementation at the SK/SS sites from their initial awards in 1997 through June 2003 (before any site had received transitional funding). Volume I summarizes Westat’s cross-site findings from multiple sources, including twice-yearly site visits, review of project documentation, three stakeholder surveys, a survey of agency personnel, and two structured surveys of “key informants.” It also discusses the lessons learned from the initiative. Volume II provides detailed case studies of the planning, implementation, and outcomes for each site. Volume III describes the methodology and findings of the final

¹ Recently, the Office on Violence Against Women was reorganized and is no longer a part of OJP, though it continues to work closely with different components of that office. For almost all of the SK/SS Initiative, OVW was under OJP, so that is the structure referred to throughout this document.

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Stakeholder Survey (N=277 respondents), conducted in 2003. Volume IV describes the methodology and findings of the 2002 Survey of Agency Personnel (N=353).

Federal Goals, Expectations, and Structure

OJP expected the SK/SS sites to:

- Restructure and strengthen their criminal and juvenile justice systems to be more comprehensive and proactive in helping children, adolescents, and families who have been involved in abuse and neglect or are at risk;
- Better coordinate the management of abuse and neglect cases by improving policy and practice in the criminal justice, juvenile justice, child welfare, family service, and related systems; and
- Develop comprehensive community-wide, cross-agency strategies to reduce child and adolescent abuse and neglect and resulting child fatalities.

Project plans had to incorporate four key elements:

- **System reform and accountability.** Sites were to reform policies, practices, and procedures across multiple systems and agencies to better identify and respond to child abuse and neglect and to hold offenders accountable. Improving cross-agency training and communication was an important part of this element.
- **A continuum of services to protect children and support families.** Sites were to provide a full range of services and supports for children and families, from prevention to treatment. In doing so, they were to explore ways to make more effective use of existing services and resources, including public and private funding and informal support systems.
- **Data collection and evaluation.** Sites were to improve information sharing across systems and agencies and make data collection about child abuse and neglect cases more uniform, so that decisions in individual cases and case management would be more informed. Sites also had to participate in the national evaluation and conduct a local evaluation to measure how well community-wide objectives and outcomes were met.
- **Prevention education.** Using multiple media, sites were to educate the community about child abuse and neglect and how to report it, the community services available for children and families, and good parenting practices.

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Sites were required to develop broad-based local collaboratives to carry out these plans. Members were to include representatives from criminal justice, child welfare, family service, education, health, and mental health agencies, along with “nontraditional” partners such as faith-based organizations, community groups, the media, and victims and their families. The SK/SS framework was flexible, to accommodate each community’s unique circumstances, and did not dictate how sites should allocate their effort among the four program elements. In OJP’s view, however, the overarching purpose of the SK/SS initiative was system reform.

A national core team, consisting of OJP program managers, Westat, and a technical assistance (TA) team, supported the initiative. The TA team was added in the second year to promote a stronger system reform focus and help sites access a wider range of TA. The TA included direct on-site assistance and subsidies for training or consultation from other sources. OJP also convened biennial “cluster conferences” for national team members and the sites.

The Grantees and Their Communities

OJP purposely selected communities with a solid infrastructure for SK/SS. All five grantees had a long history of work on child abuse and neglect, some experience with multidisciplinary and collaborative approaches, and community environments that were receptive to improving child protection. Beyond that, there were many differences in the characteristics of the lead agencies, community demographics, and local experience with cross-agency structures to coordinate approaches to child abuse and neglect.

The lead agencies in Huntsville, Kansas City, and Sault Ste. Marie had multimillion dollar budgets prior to SK/SS, compared with \$29,000 in Burlington and \$700,000 in Toledo. Sault Ste. Marie was the only project led by a government agency—Anishnabek Community & Family Services, the provider of social, mental health, and substance abuse services for the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. It was also the only project to target a Tribal population and a multicounty area. The other four grantees were nonprofit organizations. Two of them—Burlington’s Community Network for Children, Youth and Families and Kansas City’s Heart of America United Way—had been convening stakeholders with an interest in a child abuse and neglect system for many years, but were not direct service providers. In contrast, the lead agencies in Huntsville and in Toledo had pivotal roles in the formal child protection system. Huntsville’s National Children’s Advocacy Center (NCAC)

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had pioneered the Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) approach, which combines multidisciplinary handling of child abuse cases with a child-friendly setting and resources for families. Toledo’s Family and Child Abuse Prevention Center (FCAPC) was coordinating several multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), supervising a home visiting program, and managing the area’s new CAC. (Kansas City was the only other site to have a CAC, operated by a local hospital.) The projects led by nonprofits all targeted a single county, although Kansas City focused direct services mostly on three high-need ZIP Code areas.

Program Implementation

Timetable

The first 18-month grant period was intended to cover both planning and early implementation, but was devoted mostly to planning. The fully funded sites were required to prepare formal Implementation Plans, which were submitted from 5 months (Huntsville) to a year (Burlington) after the initial awards. In every case, OJP required significant revisions or additions to the plan before giving final approval, although all sites were allowed to begin partial implementation by mid-1998. Two sites, Huntsville and Sault Ste. Marie, reopened and substantially revised their planning process as a result of OJP’s feedback.

Everywhere, the second grant period marked the transition to full implementation. Burlington and Toledo were the first to access their second award—in January 1999, 21 months after the initial awards. Sault Ste. Marie was the last to do so, in January 2000. Each continuation award was for the same amount as the initial award, except in Kansas City, where the funding level was cut to \$500,000 as of the third grant period. By June 2003, when Westat ended data collection for this report, Burlington, Huntsville, and Toledo had nearly spent their last full award and were preparing to access the \$125,000 in transitional funding. Kansas City and Sault Ste. Marie had not yet tapped their last full award.

Allocation of Effort

Throughout planning and implementation, the lead agencies took primary responsibility for staffing the collaborative effort, but often used subgrants to support direct services and other discrete initiatives. Reflecting differences in the size of their awards, Kansas City and Huntsville consistently had the largest staff and Toledo the smallest. By mid-2003, all

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sites were spending from one-fifth to one-third of their SK/SS awards on core staffing and administration.

Project agendas spanned all four required program elements—system reform and accountability, continuum of services, data collection and evaluation, and prevention education and public information. However, sites made different choices initially about how to allocate their SK/SS resources, and their priorities shifted over time, based on local judgments about need and input from OJP and the TA team. During early implementation, Kansas City was the only site to allocate the largest share of its budget to system reform activities. In contrast, in Burlington, Toledo, and Sault Ste. Marie, allocations for services far outstripped allocations for system reform. Huntsville also allocated more to services than system reform initially, but the difference was not as great.

OJP and the TA team consistently urged sites to focus more on system reform and less on services. In Burlington, OJP negotiated extensively to shift the balance before awarding the fourth grant. By mid-2003, resource allocations had changed substantially across all sites. All were spending more on system reform, and Huntsville and Toledo had joined Kansas City in making it their largest investment. The turnaround in Toledo was truly dramatic, with services dropping to 27 percent of the budget (from 68% under Grant 2) and system reform rising to 47 percent (from 13%). Burlington also reduced its services budget (from 49% to 31%), redirecting funds to system reform and core staffing.

Allocations for data collection/evaluation and prevention education/public information started small and remained that way, relative to other program elements. Even so, in mid-2003, Sault Ste. Marie and Kansas City were budgeting about twice as much of the SK/SS funding for these activities as their counterparts—8 to 9 percent for data collection/evaluation and 12 to 14 percent for prevention education. Budgets for data collection ranged from nothing in Toledo to 4 and 6 percent in Huntsville and Burlington, while prevention education was budgeted at 5 to 6 percent in all three locations.

Each site carried out a unique mix of activities under each program element. There were some commonalities, however. Under system reform, for example, all sites worked to make more effective use of MDTs and CACs, enhancing them if they already existed and starting new ones if they did not. They also worked to improve training for mandated reporters. In the service area, several sites worked to expand or improve home visitation services,

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neighborhood- or community-based services, and parent education. Initiatives to help children affected by domestic violence were also common. In the data collection and evaluation area, all sites (with strong encouragement from OJP) undertook a Multisystem Case Analysis (MSCA)—tracking samples of child abuse and neglect cases across agencies in the formal child protection system. Under prevention education and public education, all sites developed a variety of resource materials (some of them web-based), appeared at community events, and made some use of mass media to carry their message. An extensive description of site-specific activities is found in Volume II.

Collaboration

Each site established a governing council to plan and implement SK/SS, building upon previous relationships and existing collaboratives. Only Toledo expanded an existing collaborative to serve as its governing body. Compared with the other sites, Sault Ste. Marie was at relative disadvantage in not having an existing collaborative to draw upon. Governing councils went through some changes, often related to turnover in member agencies' personnel, but few groups dropped out. Huntsville and Sault Ste. Marie made the most significant changes over time, replacing their original governing councils with new governance structures intended to strengthen member participation and sustainability. Sault Ste. Marie was still making the transition to its latest structure as of mid-2003, delayed by recent upheavals in Tribal leadership.

By the time the sites moved to full implementation, all the governing councils had representation from the required core agencies. Beyond that, they included a diverse array of nonprofit service providers and community groups. Typically, the agencies were represented by directors or other high level staff. The governing councils were supplemented by committees and workgroups, which also played an important role in designing and carrying out the SK/SS agenda. These groups included a broader range of participants, including mid-level and line staff from various agencies, and in some locations, community residents and clients. Most collaboratives also used broad-based community meetings to obtain community input on the project agenda and recruit more active participation.

A series of Stakeholder Surveys supplemented other sources of data on the make-up and roles of the more active stakeholders (those who served on councils or committees or received SK/SS subgrants). These surveys, conducted in 1998, 2001, and 2003, had 141, 264, and 277 respondents, respectively. On the 2003 survey, most respondents from agencies or

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other organizations said they had considerable authority to make decisions on behalf of their organizations. About 25 percent of respondents overall represented the formal child protection system (law enforcement, child protective services, prosecutors, courts), 32 percent represented other public agencies, and 26 percent private agencies. The remaining 17 percent represented “nontraditional” groups such as professional or civic organizations, community or neighborhood groups, parents, youth, and business. However, this distribution varied markedly across sites. In Toledo, for example, the largest group of respondents was from the formal child protection system (55%), and in Burlington, the largest group was private service providers (51%). Huntsville and Kansas City had the most nontraditional respondents—about 30 percent each, compared to 10 percent in Burlington and 2 or 3 percent in Toledo and Sault Ste. Marie. The typical respondent spent about 2 hours per month on SK/SS and attended 5 meetings per year, but each site had a core group of much more active stakeholders. Although there was a modest correlation between receiving funding from SK/SS and participation, among respondents whose organizations had never received SK/SS funding, many were involved several hours a month, and 38 percent said their organizations had contributed staff to SK/SS efforts.

Survey data and other interviews highlighted some challenges to developing effective collaboratives. As of 2003, limited resources and maintaining the momentum appeared to be the most pressing concerns. The least frequently reported challenge was ineffective leadership. Other challenges, such as leadership turnover, lack of participation by key agencies, and “turf issues” were of much greater concern in some locations than others. Turf issues, while still a concern in some sites, appeared to be less important than in earlier years. When turf issues did occur, they most often surfaced around CACs, MDTs, and other specific activities that required cross-agency agreement on protocols and roles—and not around the broader mission or role of SK/SS itself.

Another challenge involved getting nontraditional partners involved in the collaborative and its governing council, particularly partners who did not represent any organized group, such as parents, clients, and community residents. Respondents to the 2003 survey recognized shortcomings in this area, especially in the same sites where “nontraditional” respondents were few. Fifty-eight percent of respondents in Burlington and 41 percent in Toledo were dissatisfied with the cultural and ethnic diversity of the SK/SS effort; 58 percent in Sault Ste. Marie and 44 percent in Burlington and Sault Ste. Marie said there had not been enough community involvement.

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On balance, the collaboratives developed for SK/SS were reasonably faithful to OJP expectations. They grew and diversified over time, retained the commitment of their members, and took on issues beyond the scope of the Federal grant. They became more than a forum for information-sharing or a rubber stamp for staff, sharing responsibility and accountability for decisions, although to varying degrees. They also shared resources—primarily personnel time rather than money. In the process, the sites used many strategies typical of other successful collaboratives, including involving key players early, establishing a shared vision and defining outcomes, setting readily attainable objectives, devising creative and realistic strategies, emphasizing what partners agreed on and respecting differences, avoiding “red herrings” that would derail collaboration-building, and publicizing success and acknowledging contributions from partners. The sites were less successful at including participants at every level (especially community members and consumers, but also mid-level and line agency staff) and finding ways to empower community residents and clients to participate more effectively. Most sites were making new efforts in these areas, however.

OJP did not necessarily expect the SK/SS collaborative structure to continue beyond the term of Federal funding, but all except the Kansas City collaborative were hoping to do so. They were at different stages of planning for it as of mid-2003. Kansas City had decided to transfer the functions of its collaborative to the Jackson County Quality Assurance Committee, which oversees the exit plan for the local child protective services (CPS) agency’s Consent Decree.

Accomplishments of the Safe Kids/Safe Streets Sites

National evaluators did not observe any changes in reported child maltreatment during the term of the study and did not expect to. However, they reported significant accomplishments that are expected to help reduce maltreatment, delinquency, and other problem behaviors in the long run.

Increased Organizational Capacity To Respond to Child Abuse and Neglect

SK/SS played a key role in creating new agency structures for case handling, improving existing structures, and changing policies and procedures to improve case processing and outcomes. For example:

- Two sites (Burlington and Huntsville) implemented new prosecution units.
- Four sites started Drug Courts (Huntsville, Kansas City, Sault Ste. Marie, and Toledo).
- Three sites (Huntsville, Kansas City, and Toledo) started or expanded law enforcement units to handle child maltreatment and domestic violence.
- The two sites without CACs at the outset (Burlington and Sault Ste. Marie) started them.
- The three sites with existing CACs made a variety of improvements in their training, procedures, and MDT arrangements.
- One site (Burlington) upgraded and expanded MDTs for at-risk or “gray area” families. It also improved resources and facilities for forensic examinations of sexual assault victims.
- Aside from these changes, two sites (Kansas City and Toledo) were especially active in developing other new protocols, procedures, and guidelines, among them protocols for filing court cases on drug-exposed infants, structured decisionmaking tools for CPS, permanency planning protocols for Juvenile Court, and pediatric sexual assault guidelines.

Most of these changes do not depend on SK/SS funds for their continuation. The exceptions are the new CACs in Burlington and Sault Ste. Marie, which had yet to establish a secure funding base as of June 2003.

Increased Personal and Professional Capacity To Respond to Child Abuse and Neglect

SK/SS stakeholders benefited personally from participation in the project, according to survey respondents. In the 2003 survey, 72 percent said they had made new contacts in the child abuse and neglect field, and more than half made new contacts in the juvenile justice field, received new training as a result of SK/SS, and/or increased their ability to

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do their jobs effectively. All sites had an active training agenda and attempted to improve mandated reporting and cross-agency understanding of roles and responsibilities in the child protection system. While some popular training efforts will need funding to continue after SK/SS, many efforts were designed to survive through development of products and/or adoption by another agency. These include, for example:

- A self-administered tutorial for mandated reporters, now required for all new Tribal employees (Sault Ste. Marie).
- A training curriculum on Medical Aspects of Child Abuse and Neglect, now mandated for CPS workers and conducted by the local children's hospital (Kansas City).
- A mandated reported video and toolkit, to be distributed statewide (Burlington).
- *Resources 101*, a monthly orientation to community resources, required for new agency staff at CPS and Healthy Families (Huntsville).

New or Expanded Services for Children and Families

In the short term, the projects succeeded in filling some gaps in the continuum of prevention, intervention, and treatment services, primarily through subgrants to service providers and community agencies. Several of the services were designed to reach out to families in their homes and neighborhoods. In most sites, it was too soon to judge whether the services will survive the loss of SK/SS support, but the evaluators found some promising signs:

- In Burlington, the project had already discontinued its many subgrants, yet most services were continuing, albeit at slightly reduced levels. Continuing services ran the gamut from intensive home visitation and grandparent support to group therapy for child witnesses of violence and treatment for juvenile sex offenders.
- When Kansas City cut back its Neighborhood Services Grants (a result of reductions in its SK/SS award), it successfully leveraged other local resources to take up the slack.
- Toledo revamped its home visitation model, the project's major service priority, to make it more affordable and secured additional support for it through state and Federal funding.

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- Alternate funding was supporting several programs developed in Huntsville, including First Responders (to domestic violence scenes), Parents as Teachers, supervised visitation, and a parenting program for noncustodial fathers.
- Three sites (Burlington, Huntsville, and Kansas City) had sponsored training to increase the ability of service providers and grassroots organizations to raise funds on their own.

Greater Interagency Communication, Cooperation, and Collaboration

Many of the new programs and protocols, by their very nature, required greater interagency communication and collaboration. It was too early to tell whether these specific relationships would endure. However, many key informants reported that collaboration had become the normal, expected way of doing business—i.e., the community culture had changed—and they credited SK/SS with playing a key role in that change. Closer collaboration between the domestic violence and child protection communities was particularly noteworthy in several sites.

In other areas, accomplishments were more modest or uneven across sites. It was also too early to judge their ultimate payoff, although there were signs of short-term successes. Many of these activities will require alternate sources of support to continue beyond SK/SS.

Increasing Cultural Competence

All sites took some steps to promote cultural competency through training or grant programs. Sault Ste. Marie had the most comprehensive approach, undertaking an ambitious multi-year training program called the Community Healing Process, which was designed to infuse cultural values and practices throughout Tribal programs. The Tribe's Cultural Division was expected to become a permanent home for continuing these efforts. Huntsville inaugurated the popular Diversity Schoolhouse, which has been copied by four other communities and will be continued by the lead agency.

Increased Capacity for Collecting and Using Data

This was a challenging area for SK/SS, but there was evidence of some capacity-building. First, Westat detected greater recognition of the need for data-based decisionmaking

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and an increased appetite for information about how well individual agencies and the community are addressing child maltreatment. One concrete improvement: frustrated by its difficulty finding local evaluation expertise for SK/SS, the lead agency in Huntsville created a new research division. Second, several sites modestly improved their capabilities for electronic case tracking and information sharing, by upgrading technology for e-mail and interagency access to data. Several sites contributed to development of new databases for certain types of cases or clients (serious sexual and physical abuse cases in Burlington, substance abuse clients in Sault Ste. Marie, emergency room cases and home visitation clients in Toledo).

Increased Prevention Education and Public Awareness

In this area, it was easier to gauge efforts than results. Huntsville and Sault Ste. Marie developed comprehensive public information campaigns around child abuse and neglect and also tried to make community resource information broadly available by instituting web-based resource information systems. Burlington developed a resource directory that got wide distribution, and Huntsville's "Purple Pages" team succeeded in adding a resource section to the phone book. Burlington and Kansas City also used subgrants to support prevention education. Kansas City's grant program was explicitly intended to build community capacity for continued prevention education.

Changes in Legislation, State Policy, and Resource Distribution

Many of the accomplishments referenced above required participating agencies to shift resources. However, SK/SS efforts to effect macro-level changes in legislation, state policy, or resources were in their infancy. With TA support, Huntsville had begun working on developing a local Children's Budget. The Kansas City and Burlington collaboratives had voiced their concerns on budget cuts at the state level. But mostly the sites were still in reactive mode. Burlington had started to be more proactive, cosponsoring regular legislative breakfasts and joining the state's leading child advocacy group, where staff successfully persuaded the group to add a separate section on maltreatment to its agenda.

Local Perspectives on Accomplishments

Westat systematically solicited local perspectives on accomplishments through the 2003 Stakeholder Survey and a 2002 Survey of Agency Personnel. (Details of these surveys are

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presented in Volumes III and IV, respectively.) On average, stakeholders responded that SK/SS had affected their community in 9 areas, out of a list of 19 choices. Across sites, the most frequently reported effects were:

- Improvements in communication and cooperation among those who deal with child abuse and neglect (74%),
- Improvements in multiagency responses to children affected by domestic violence (67%),
- Improved community education on child abuse and neglect (61%),
- Expanded prevention programs (60%), and
- Improved information sharing and case tracking across agencies (60%).

When asked to select the *most* important effects out of the 19, the top choice was improving communication and cooperation in Burlington, Huntsville, and Kansas City. In Toledo, respondents ranked improving information sharing and case-tracking number one and in Sault Ste. Marie, the most popular choice was educating community residents about child abuse and neglect.

The majority of stakeholders felt that SK/SS had significantly affected their own agencies in one or more ways (73%), had a major effect on the children and families they served (55%), and were quite satisfied with the SK/SS accomplishments (66%). Satisfaction levels were highest in Huntsville (79%) and Burlington (70%) and lowest in Sault Ste. Marie (49%) and Toledo (59%), with Kansas City in between (65%).

On the 2002 Survey of Agency Personnel, most respondents (77%) reported making more frequent interagency contacts. They usually attributed these changes to improved knowledge of whom to contact and a closer working relationship with staff of other agencies. Some respondents reported other improvements. About 57 percent saw some improvement in the child protection system in the past 2 years, at least in some areas. Just over one-third (34%) of all workers attributed some of the improvement to SK/SS, but many respondents were not familiar with the SK/SS project.

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Factors That Influenced the Outcomes of the Safe Kids/Safe Streets Projects

The OJP Framework for Safe Kids/Safe Streets

Several features of the OJP framework help account for the solid performance of SK/SS. They include an adaptable program design, a generous timeframe, a strong commitment to the primacy of system reform and comprehensive collaboration, the availability of TA and other supports, and the emphasis on treating SK/SS as a “learning community.” Some features of the framework presented challenges, however, including the broad parameters of the initiative; the limited body of knowledge about collaborative approaches; OJP’s interoffice management structure; turnover among OJP managers, TA, and evaluation personnel; lack of clarity about requirements vs. suggestions or options, and the continued elaboration of expectations. Some of these challenges were unavoidable or represent the downside of otherwise desirable features, but careful planning might minimize them in future initiatives.

Site-Level Factors

Across sites, several factors set the stage for successful project efforts, including: the selection of a credible lead agency, a history of collaboration, a favorable community climate, initial commitments from key decisionmakers, and the existence of complementary initiatives. Four other factors helped the sites make good on the opportunity offered by SK/SS—skilled project leadership and staff, leadership stability, development of a process and structure that supported collaboration, and sustained commitment from key partners.

While the positives outweighed the negatives, there were obstacles to be overcome. They included a preoccupation with service strategies as the solution to local problems; limitations in local data collection systems and evaluation capabilities; turnover in leadership positions at key agencies; absent or intermittent partners; limited involvement by neighborhood representatives, parents, consumers, and other nontraditional partners; belated attention to sustainability planning; turf issues; and a declining economy. Two factors—highly publicized child fatalities (in Burlington and Kansas City) and resource differentials across projects—had mixed or uncertain effects on project outcomes.

Lessons Learned From the Safe Kids/Safe Streets Experience

Overall, the original design and OJP’s approach to implementation were assets to the SK/SS initiative. The evaluators concluded that the SK/SS approach can succeed in a wide range of communities. However, some community conditions make success more likely. These include the conditions favored by OJP in its selection criteria, such as existing capacity and infrastructure, including a capable, credible lead agency and prior experience with collaboration. Also, flexibility in program oversight and design can help programs overcome barriers, weather false starts, and adapt to new challenges and opportunities.

In summing up, the evaluators highlight many “good ideas” that emerged from the experience of the SK/SS demonstration sites. These include developing effective strategies for building and maintaining collaboratives, increasing the personal and professional capacities of stakeholders, institutionalizing cross-agency training, and building cultural competence. They encourage other jurisdictions to look to the SK/SS sites for examples of new or enhanced structures that may combat child abuse—such as Drug Courts, special police or prosecution units, CACs, and MDTs—and examples of useful policy/procedural changes. They also point to the range of services implemented. In the data collection and evaluation arena, the evaluators encourage other jurisdictions to seek TA early on results-based accountability approaches and data integration, so that they can inform planning and resource allocation. In the prevention education sphere, evaluators urge sites to explicitly link these efforts to their overall system reform agenda.

The national evaluators also offer recommendations for sponsors of future comprehensive, community-wide, collaborative initiatives. These recommendations cover:

- Addressing timing issues through a longer planning period (9 to 12 months), a longer demonstration period overall (8 to 10 years), a transitional period of stepped-down funding (1 to 2 years), and more detailed project timelines.
- Achieving balance by providing more initial guidance about the interrelationships among program elements, the appropriate balance of investments, the relationship between service efforts and system reform, and the participation of nontraditional partners.
- Providing TA during planning, implementation, and the transition from Federal or other outside funding.

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- Developing a learning community by providing clear and consistent messages from all team members, defining roles for all team members, providing TA to collaborative partners (including project staff and key stakeholders), documenting key decisions or understandings reached with sites, and expanding communication beyond project staff to stakeholders.
- Evaluating comprehensive initiatives, at the local level, by focusing evaluation on “results-based accountability,” involving local evaluators in planning, and using evaluation committees or similar structures to engage stakeholders, and, at the national level, by defining the evaluator’s role early, aligning evaluation products with the needs of the learning community, and bringing local and national evaluators together more often to exchange information/expertise and plan joint efforts.