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Findings from the Safe Kids/Safe Streets National Evaluation Safe Kids/Safe Streets, Toledo, Ohio

PREPARED BY WESTAT, NATIONAL EVALUATOR FOR THE PROGRAM

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, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP), was designed to break the cycle, by reducing child abuse and neglect through comprehensive, multifaceted strategies involving a wide array of community partners. Five demonstration sites were selected to implement the program, which began in 1997. The five communities hosting the program were Burlington, VT; Huntsville, AL; Kansas City, MO; Sault Ste. Marie, MI; and Toledo OH.¹

The grantee for the Lucas County Safe Kids/Safe Streets program, the Family and Child Abuse Prevention Center (FCAPC), is a nonprofit, community-based education, public awareness, and direct services agency. The Toledo Hospital serves as the fiduciary agent for the program. The core partners of the FCAPC included the Juvenile Court, law enforcement, Lucas County Children's Services (LCCS), the Family Council, and the Juvenile Council.

The Toledo SK/SS program is unique because it was awarded only "seed funding" from the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), in order to more fully develop prevention programs for child abuse and neglect. The program received five grants of \$125,000 from 1997 to 2003; in 2003, OJP decided to provide an additional \$125,000 per site to cover a final year of transition to non-Federal funding. Total funding for the SK/SS program in Toledo totaled \$750,000.

Collaboration Building

Central to OJP's model of the SK/SS program was that programs were to be "firmly centered within larger community-based initiatives."² Toledo's collaborative built on existing

¹ For more information about this program, see Gragg, F., Cronin, R., Schultz, D., Eisen, K. *National Evaluation of the Safe Kids/Safe Streets Program: Final Report. (Volumes I – IV)*. Rockville, MD: Westat, 2004.

² Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Safe Kids/Safe Streets-Community Approaches to Reducing Abuse and Neglect and Preventing Delinquency*, FY 1996 Discretionary Competitive Program Announcements and Application Kit, Washington, DC: Author, July 1996: 35.

community groups and was composed of a governing council, a Steering Committee, subcommittees and workgroups. The pre-existing Lucas County Child Abuse Task Force (CATF) served as the governing council for the SK/SS project with FCAPC providing management oversight. CATF had already played a key leadership role in Toledo. It had developed the Interagency Lucas County Plan of Cooperation and Protocols, which defined the roles in the child abuse and neglect service continuum back in 1987 and more recently, worked to establish the Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC).

The collaboration and the governing council evolved through the life of the project. In 2000, the CATF reorganized, developed a new SK/SS steering committee, and reconfigured the Advocacy, Prevention, and Research Committee as the Evaluation Committee for SK/SS. The Service Coordination Committee also took the lead on the SK/SS project newsletter. At the same time, the CATF decided that to facilitate “ownership” of the collaborative, a different agency would provide leadership each year.

In 1999, with help from SK/SS consultants, the project also affiliated with the Comprehensive Strategies for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders initiative in Toledo, another OJP-funded program. This initiative, which predated SK/SS, involves Juvenile Court, social services, and community-based agencies collaborating to improve the juvenile justice system, provide first-time offenders with structured programs and services, and offer appropriate prevention methods to children, families, and communities. The linkage between the two initiatives brought more court involvement to SK/SS and provided the project and its lead agency a seat at the policymaking table along with Lucas County Children's Services (LCCS), law enforcement, and the courts. FCAPC also became an active participant in the Lucas County Family Council, a state-mandated council that administers state and Federal funds for early intervention services.

Implementation

The activities undertaken under each of the four program elements required by OJP—system reform and accountability, continuum of services, data collection and evaluation, and prevention education and public information—were varied and extensive. The SK/SS project was initially conceived of as a service delivery program to address the deficits in prevention of child abuse and neglect identified by OJP. Gradually, it broadened its vision as a result of contacts with OJP, the other SK/SS sites, and other local initiatives. The program maintained a

service and training focus through most of 1999. In 2000, the project increased its involvement with the OJP-funded, Comprehensive Strategies program. Starting in 2001 and continuing into 2003, data collection and evaluation became a high priority, as did strengthening and sustaining the collaboration. Below we discuss the staffing for implementing the initiative, followed by highlights of the efforts implemented.

Staffing. The SK/SS project had a small management staff, which experienced several changes in leadership over the years. Despite these changes, SK/SS activities were not seriously affected. Many former SK/SS staff (both management and direct service) remained involved with SK/SS efforts, working from their new positions outside of FCAPC. FCAPC initially provided the project's management staff in-kind. However, in 1999, project funds began supporting a project director. The project also funded several assessment and support workers and a supervisor for Building Healthy Families (BHF).³ SK/SS funding also subsidized a victim advocate, as well as a program supervisor, crisis counselor, and case manager at the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC). The SK/SS approach to funding BHF staff changed significantly over the life of the project. During 2000, SK/SS shifted from funding direct services to funding supervisory, training, and coordination positions that would support all BHF programs throughout the county. The project found other state and Federal monies to support the assessment workers. SK/SS then redirected project funds to a supervisor for the Help Me Grow Contract Providers Committee, a new collaboration of BHF and Early Start agencies. SK/SS also helped fund an assessment trainer and contracted for a mental health consultant to also train direct service workers.

System Reform and Accountability. In addition to developing the collaboration, SK/SS conducted a range of system reform activities, focusing more on this component as the project developed. Three efforts were cornerstones of the project: (1) developing the CAC, (2) enhancing the multidisciplinary team (MDT), and (3) juvenile court reform.

The CAC was one of the focal points of system reform activities for the Lucas County SK/SS project. The major goals included updating the CAC protocol, developing strategies to increase awareness and utilization of the CAC, and ultimately creating a "one-stop shopping" center where child abuse victims and their families can receive sensitive, coordinated, and culturally competent services and advocacy. Over time, the SK/SS project's financial support for staffing allowed services to expand to include help for children who witness violence,

³ Originally called Healthy Families Lucas County (HFLC), this was a home visitation program for new mothers.

parenting classes for men and women at an adult correctional center, and services for children experiencing various types of trauma—the latter in coordination with the Children’s Trauma Practice Center funded by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The project also established a support network for professionals who work with victims of abuse at the CAC.

Improving the existing MDT remained a shared goal of the SK/SS project and its partner agencies. Key informant interviews conducted in the fall of 2000 revealed significant conflict surrounding the MDT decision-making process and its actual outcomes. The biggest frustration with the MDT was that not all case decisions were made at formal MDT meetings as planned. Many MDT members were also frustrated at the lag time between the initial child abuse investigation by LCCS and the presentation of the case to the MDT, creating a serious barrier to consensual decision-making. In response, the SK/SS project sponsored several training sessions. In 2003, the American Prosecutors Research Institute’s National Center for the Prosecution of Child Abuse conducted a 2-day forensic interview training. That same year, the Midwest Regional CAC conducted development training and identified critical issues for the Lucas County CAC and MDT. Several MDT members also attended a training put on by the Ohio Network of CACs (ONCAC). These events reenergized Team members and spurred monthly strategic planning sessions. Through these sessions, the MDT clarified its mission, goals, case presentation criteria, and operating procedures. The project scheduled additional forensic interview training on the Childhood Trust model (the model adopted by ONCAC) for the Toledo Police Department. A new supervisor at LCCS now co-facilitates the MDT, which has also provided positive leadership for the group.

Another of the project’s major system reform emphases was court reform and permanency planning efforts. To kick off court reform efforts, the SK/SS project coordinator, a Magistrate from the Juvenile Court Dependency Division, and an LCCS attorney attended a symposium at the National Center for State Courts. SK/SS funded their participation. This group subsequently visited two model court systems. In 2001, the local court-appointed special advocate sponsored a series of related workshops entitled *Permanency for the Abused and Neglected Child* to increase community support for permanency planning and to provide training and education to judges and social service and court professionals. In 2003, the Court implemented a new permanency planning protocol outlining reforms in the court process. For example, the Court now makes attorneys available for qualified parties appearing for emergency shelter care (removal) hearings in child protection cases. Also in 2003, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges designated the Lucas County Juvenile Court as a model court.

Continuum of Services. At the beginning of the SK/SS project, Healthy Families Lucas County (HFLC) represented Toledo's primary prevention and early intervention activity. HFLC provided long-term services for at-risk families through home visitation and parental role modeling. The SK/SS project reevaluated the model and curriculum in 1999, concluding that the HFLC model was too expensive, particularly because of strict criteria related to the number of home visits, maximum caseload for workers, and enrollment immediately after birth. The project ultimately adopted Building Healthy Families (BHF), a less intensive and less expensive model than HFLC. The project established the Help Me Grow Contract Providers Committee (originally called the Building Healthy Families Collaborative) to transition from the HFLC model to BHF. These changes dove-tailed with the SK/SS decision to shift funding from direct services to supervision, training, and coordination functions, described earlier. Ultimately, funding from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Ohio Department of Health, and the Early Start Program supplemented BHF, allowing the program to double in size and capacity to reach families. The project views these funding sources as long-term financial support for BHF.⁴

Data Collection and Evaluation. SK/SS approached this element of the project through subcontracts with experts in evaluation. The project (1) conducted a limited local evaluation, (2) implemented a multisystem case analysis, and (3) collaborated on management information system efforts.

For its local evaluation, the project initially focused on exploring the potential utility of a planned community education/media campaign. The project secured funding from the U. S. Bureau of Justice Statistics to conduct a baseline assessment of adult perceptions of child abuse and neglect in Lucas County. The survey assessed community knowledge about child abuse and neglect, including how to report suspected abuse. The survey found that respondents had significant knowledge deficits.⁵ During 2001, SK/SS renewed evaluation efforts by subcontracting with a local evaluator. The project hoped to build the internal capacity of the SK/SS project for ongoing evaluation and to develop a structure that would create stakeholder ownership of evaluation efforts. In the shorter term, the project established a multiagency evaluation committee within the governing council and focused on research related to the CAC,

⁴ The early intervention programs in Lucas County have had several different names. "Early Start" now refers to several early intervention programs – Right from the Start, Welcome Home, Early Start, Help Me Grow and BHF -- that provide prevention, home visitation, and early intervention services. The FCAPC still calls its individual program, BHF.

⁵ Price, J.H., Islam, R., Gruhler, J., Dove, L., Knowles, J., & Stults, G., "Public Perceptions of Child abuse and Neglect in a Midwestern Urban Community," *Journal of Community Health*, 26(4), 2001: 271-284.

BHF, and system-level issues. The evaluation team made considerable progress in designing and implementing strategies to centralize data collection, storage, processing, and analysis at the CAC. LCCS now forwards disposition statistics to the CAC, which is then able to report outcome statistics for clients. The evaluators also revised and implemented a new client satisfaction survey and developed a survey for professionals who refer clients to the CAC.

The SK/SS project, the CATF, and other key agencies involved in Comprehensive Strategies (including LCCS, the Juvenile Court, and the Family Council) began exploring the multisystem case analysis in 2001. For this analysis, the project sampled cases from 2001, since that was the first year that automated systems were thought to exist for all participating agencies. After completing data collection in 2003, the project produced a draft report. The SK/SS project hopes that multisystem case analysis will ultimately be integrated into the Family Council's countywide data and evaluation network.

While SK/SS in Toledo did not pursue an expansive management information system, it was involved with such efforts at partner agencies. The project participated in developing a database on child abuse and neglect for emergency medical centers. Utilizing funds from the Ohio Department of Health and Toledo Hospital, this effort designed a comprehensive database for emergency medical centers, law enforcement, the courts, and social service providers. SK/SS plans to use OJP transitional funds to install a computer network server to facilitate data transfer. The project's data coordination efforts also focused on the BHF program, which now tracks all families receiving services, as part of the implementation of a common assessment tool among early intervention service providers.

Prevention Education and Public Information. Early on, the Toledo SK/SS project envisioned a public education media campaign that built on results from the citizen survey on child abuse attitudes. The Silence Hurts Our Community and Kids (SHOCK) Campaign was developed by members of the Ad Club of Greater Toledo as a pro bono project in 1997-98. The campaign included public service announcements for radio and television, brochures, and billboards. Unfortunately, the project did not have funding for the campaign in either of its first two budgets and never secured other funding for it. The project did produce and distribute a SK/SS brochure.

After setting aside the broader plans for a public media campaign, the project developed a newsletter and web site. The newsletter, done in collaboration with the CATF service coordination committee and Toledo Hospital, was distributed approximately three times a year to

over 500 individuals and agencies. The newsletter highlighted a different community coalition in every issue and provided updates on SK/SS project activities and other CATF activities. The Toledo hospital agreed to cover printing costs for the newsletter after SK/SS funds are gone. The project also developed a web site for FCAPC that includes a section on SK/SS and links to partner agencies. FCAPC plans to support this web site after SK/SS funding ends and hopes to include cross-agency training schedules and a list of best practices and training curricula.

Project Accomplishments. Over the course of SK/SS, the project appears to have done a good job of realizing OJP's vision. However, developing the program as intended (particularly integrating the four program elements into a unified system reform effort) took years, repeated clarification from OJP, and technical assistance. The accomplishments of the program are summarized below.

The Lucas County SK/SS project could point to many achievements in the area of system reform, and prospects for their continuation looked promising. Most important, perhaps, is that collaboration has become routine for many agencies involved in preventing or responding to child abuse and neglect.

A second significant and enduring system change is the Permanency Planning Protocol. The protocol is based on best practices, including reforms to front-load coordinated services and other policy and practice changes at the court to achieve timely permanence for children under court jurisdiction. The approach also includes data collection strategies to evaluate progress.

Lastly, in close collaboration with the Family Council, the project was successful in accessing blended funding (local, state, and Federal funds) to support early intervention services, standardized assessment, and statewide data collection through the Help Me Grow system. This represents a major achievement, affecting the resources available for the prevention and early intervention of child abuse and neglect in Lucas County long-term.

There were other significant system changes in which the project played a substantial role including:

- Enhancement of early intervention services by creating a BHF coordinator position, a central intake site, and coordinating training for all BHF workers;
- Strengthening the fledging CAC and interagency protocols;

- Enhancement of medical center responses to child victims of sexual abuse through the development and distribution of Pediatric Sexual Abuse Guidelines;
- Enhancement of coordinated responses for child victims of sexual abuse and severe physical abuse by improving the MDT through multidisciplinary training, forensic interviewing training, and a memorandum of agreement for the joint investigation process;
- Enhancement of treatment for child victims and witnesses of abuse through the establishment of the Children’s Trauma Center and Children Who Witness Violence project;
- Greater integration of responses to domestic violence, including children who witness violence, between LCCS, the police, and the provider community; and
- Establishment of an emergency medical center database and information sharing system for domestic violence and child abuse and neglect cases.

Local Perspectives on Accomplishments. Judging from our various surveys, SK/SS stakeholders in Toledo are satisfied with both the collaborative process and its accomplishments. Through SK/SS, CATF reengineered its committee structure, establishing a working collaborative with members from diverse sectors of the community. Collaborative members developed a common vision and strategic plans and engaged representatives from nontraditional sectors, including faith-based organizations and grassroots community organizations as well as citizens. The collaborative also confronted sustainability issues and was considering formal changes in its affiliation in order to solidify its position. In our surveys, many stakeholders and other key informants said that the SK/SS project deserves considerable credit for this shift toward collaboration, although programs like Comprehensive Strategies no doubt played a role. It seems unlikely that the Lucas County community would revert to the level of collaboration that existed before the Comprehensive Strategies and SK/SS initiatives.

Other accomplishments, cited by respondents to the 2003 Stakeholders Survey (N=30), were:

- Improved information-sharing and case tracking across agencies (reported by 48%) and
- Improved communication/cooperation among those who deal with child abuse and neglect (39%).

Open-ended interviews with key informants in 2002 suggest similar program accomplishments. In this interview increased collaboration was seen as the most important outcome. These respondents also identified accomplishments which flowed from collaboration, such as a change in the way agencies do business, specifically, moving from a single to multiagency response for problem-solving and for writing and managing grants. For example, key informants cited the following accomplishments:

- The lead agency, FCAPC, got a seat at the Family Council table with other public agency executives and decisionmakers and became an active participant.
- FCAPC was empowered to be part of the child protective services community and enhance systems change; and
- Agencies are talking and working together. Service agencies that had nothing to do with child abuse and neglect or juvenile delinquency are now “playing in the same sandbox.”

Factors Affecting Project Success. Many factors influenced program development and progress. The following factors had a positive impact on the project:

- Alliances and collaboration with other organizations. The SK/SS project was able to tie its efforts into Comprehensive Strategies, which was led by the Juvenile Court and adopted as a planning framework by the Family Council. The collaboration between the two initiatives provided important linkages among frontline professionals, agency executive directors, and the juvenile justice system. The goals of SK/SS were integrated into the broader goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Strategies effort, and this provided a way for the project to work on changing the systems response to child abuse and neglect and juvenile delinquency.
- A strong lead agency. The FCAPC's experience in coordinating the CATF, developing the CAC, and supporting the MDT was critical in facilitating the SK/SS agenda. Although the CATF was primarily an informal collaborative without any formal authority, it successfully implemented child abuse and neglect protocols in member agencies throughout Lucas County.

The project also faced a number of challenges. Primarily, it was challenging to maintain consistent executive-level support from some of the major agencies, including the Prosecutor's Office and at varying times, from the Chief of Police. Also, the demonstration program, as outlined by OJP, was an enormous endeavor. At times there was a lack of clarity about OJP expectations and technical assistance timetables, and the project seemed uncertain about what OJP expected and unclear how to interpret feedback received from OJP.

Surprisingly, the restriction to “seed” funding had both positive and negative effects on the Lucas County SK/SS program. From a negative perspective, SK/SS was unable to fully fund the major programs outlined in its original proposal; stakeholder expectations had to be adjusted accordingly. On the positive side, the Toledo SK/SS program was not required to go through a protracted planning process like that of the other sites. Toledo was able to move comparatively quickly into developing its prevention program.