



An Introduction to the Community Parenting Support Saturation Program

A 3-year Plan to Build A Foundation of Family Resources



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Background

In Spring 2017, a small group of foundations came together to explore the different ways that they could effectively offer families and caregivers a wide range of supports that have an impact on their child's growth and readiness for kindergarten. Their query was: *"Is it possible to significantly and measurably increase the number and percentage of children who successfully arrive at kindergarten fully ready to thrive by more effectively engaging and supporting primary caregivers in their parenting efforts and activities?"* With this query, they worked with Start Early, Family Focus, and Logan Square Neighborhood Association to explore the feasibility of saturating a community with a diverse and wide array of parenting supports. Through family input and focus groups, Start Early and their partners developed a framework and concept for the Community Parenting Support Saturation program.

In the fall of 2019, with over a half century of experience successfully engaging with families on countless endeavors and expertise in community systems development, Illinois Action for Children (IAFC) was awarded the opportunity to be the Lead Implementation Partner for the Community Parenting Support Saturation program. In this role, IAFC provides oversight and strategic direction for the Community Parenting Support Saturation program, leveraging its community

systems development expertise to strengthen the communities' capacity to saturate parenting interventions and services to all families with young children. In December 2020, through a competitive RFP process spearheaded by IAFC, three communities were chosen to pilot this program in Illinois: Rockford (led by Alignment Rockford), Aurora (led by SPARK Early Childhood Collaboration), and the North Lawndale community of Chicago (led by the Carole Robertson Center for Learning). The program will also be evaluated by an external evaluator, Chapin Hall, to understand the program's impact over time.

Throughout the course of this multi-year initiative, IAFC will provide a wide range of training and technical assistance to communities by:

- Advancing a human-centered design approach;
- Using data for project development;
- Engaging families locally and building parent voice;
- Utilizing a racial equity approach;
- Strengthening community partnerships and cultivating community resources.

The Community Parenting Support Saturation program's overall goal and outcome is to ensure families are embraced and supported as the most important influences in their children's early learning, and that every child starts kindergarten

thriving, ready to learn, and excited about school. This document outlines the roadmap for the Community Parenting Support Saturation program (CPSS) and speaks directly to the change we hope to affect through this grant.

Approach

The funders of the CPSS program established these core beliefs and values that informed the program design:

- Parents, families, and communities want the best for their young children;
- Parenting is challenging;
- Parents, families, and communities have a significant impact on their children's health, emotional and behavioral well-being, education, and long-term success;
- The best thing we can do for children is to support their parents to be the best parents they can be;
- Recent findings from behavioral and brain science provide important insights into child development;
- We, as a funding community, are interested in supporting parents, families, and communities to use this new knowledge;
- We believe in the importance of community leadership, innovation, continuous improvement, collaboration, and evaluation.

IAFC believes in meeting families "where they're at" because we understand each family is different, and not all their needs are the same. The program will focus on meeting families where they're at, as well as including family input and voice in the program design and implementation as much as possible.

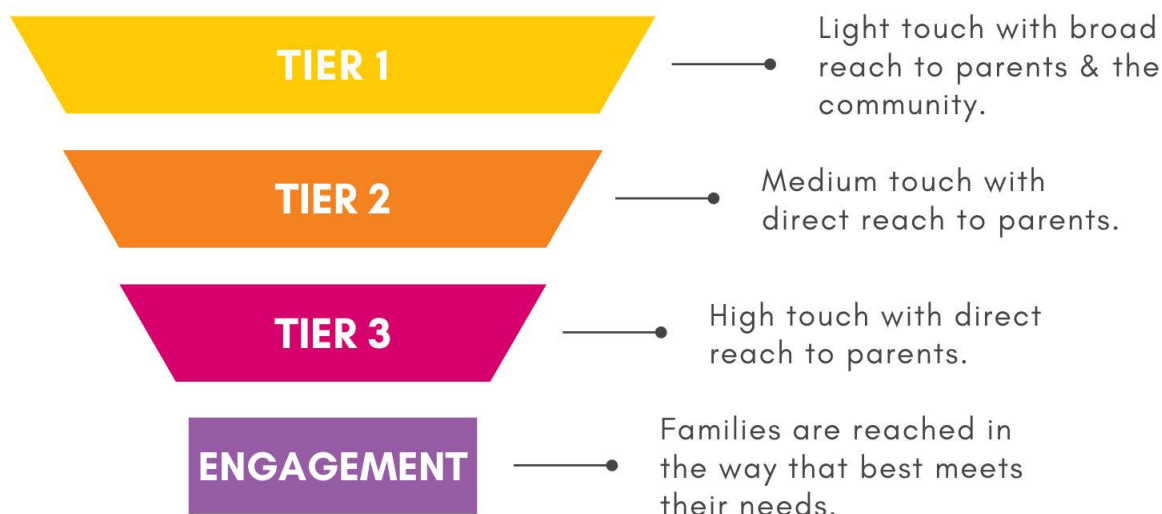
Parenting Interventions and Supports

Through this program, communities will identify and design a "community saturation" approach to provide parenting interventions for families that

"Through our focused, targeted saturation strategies, we hope to teach our entire community the key role they play in positively shaping a child's life." - Anisha Grimmer, Executive Director of Alignment Rockford

ultimately help them to prepare their children for kindergarten. We define saturation as an array of interventions that collectively address multiple levels of parenting needs, available to all parents of young children (ages birth to 5) in a community. Such interventions might range from high reach/

LEVELS OF PARENTING SUPPORTS



intensive approaches (e.g., home visiting), to low reach/universal strategies (e.g., public awareness campaigns, parenting apps, etc.).

The parenting interventions that each community will implement are evidence-based and evidence-informed. While each community will offer a different mix and range of parenting interventions, the services implemented will reflect the needs of the families in the community.

Tier 1: Light Touch with Broad Reach to Parents and the Community

Tier 2: Medium Touch with Direct Reach to Parents

Tier 3: High Touch with Direct Reach to Parents

Human-Centered Design

IAFC values the inclusion of family and community input in the design and implementation of a program. To ensure that the program is actively seeking and including family input, all three communities will develop their capacity to advance human-centered design approaches. A human-centered design approach allows the program to bring together diverse stakeholders to develop solutions and problem-solve collectively with principles of empathy, equity, and connection. IAFC partnered with Greater Good Studio to train

and build the capacity of Rockford, Aurora, and North Lawndale community members to implement human-centered approaches, bringing family input and insight in their planning and project design.

While human-centered design approaches vary, the general components of human-centered design embraced by Greater Good Studio include:

Framing: Defining questions to answer and people to engage;

Research: Learning from people about their needs and values;

Synthesis: Finding patterns of behavior and areas of opportunity;

Concepting: Creating a high volume of new ideas;

Prototyping: Making tangible mock-ups and gathering feedback;

Piloting: Testing solutions in real time with real people.

By using this approach, families, community members, and stakeholders are put first. Communities benefit from strategies that engage, involve, and include families and their experiences with an intentional racial equity lens, ensuring success and sustainability.

Stronger Families, Stronger Communities

Ultimately, the major outcome of this project is that parents are embraced and supported as the most important influences in their children's early learning, and that every child starts kindergarten thriving, ready to learn, and excited about school. The program includes outcomes not only for families, but for entire communities as well.

For communities:

- Increased connections and capacity to advance community strategies;
- Improved knowledge and skills in implementing a human-centered design approach with individuals and organizations;
- Elevated collaboration with early learning providers, parenting-related, and community-based organizations' services that can support families with young children;
- More champions, including parents of young children, developed to advocate for early



- learning programs and services; and
- Higher number of community partners, including parents who contribute to saturation activities.

For families:

- Increased confidence in supporting their children's growth and learning;
- Advanced participation in parenting or community activities;
- Enhanced social capital through networking and relationship-building;
- Expanded knowledge of the importance of child development and early childhood programs; and
- Increased participation in advocacy activities.

Stronger families mean stronger communities. IAFC is working to ensure all families of young children have a comprehensive array of interventions, activities, and supports available to them at every level of need. To reach these goals, an intense investment of time and resources will take place throughout the life of this project. Through policy and advocacy, we will also address barriers to accessing services for families with young children.

Moving Forward

Over the next two years, the communities participating in IAFC's Community Parenting Support Saturation program hopefully will see

positive changes in their ability to support families in their own caregiving, and that their children will be healthy, happy, and ready for kindergarten. We anticipate that communities will be able to engage families, helping place family experiences and voice at the center of their ongoing community initiatives. Finally, we hope that the Community Parenting Support Saturation program will also help achieve racial equity in early childhood services for families with young children.

The early years of a child's life are pivotal to a child's growth and learning. Through a community saturation approach, we are building a foundation for the future success of our children, families, and communities. We're excited to see how the project takes shape in our pilot communities and look forward to sharing the successful results with you.

Illinois Action for Children's Community Parenting Support Saturation Leadership Team:

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“Illinois Action for Children is a catalyst for organizing, developing and supporting strong families and powerful communities where children matter most.”



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