

Evaluation Report
Neighborhood Alliance for Child Safety
July 25, 2000



Submitted by
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Evaluation Process

The Children's Bureau, grantee for the Neighborhood Alliance for Child Safety, contracted with the Institute for Family and Social Responsibility (FASR) to conduct the evaluation of this neighborhood-based early intervention project on the west side of Indianapolis in the 46222 zip code. In consultation with the NACS staff and the Steering Committee, FASR developed a set of evaluation tools, including interview protocols to be used with several target groups, data to be extracted from the ICWIS data base, and data to be collected and reported from the NACS records of service delivery. After some revisions, the interview protocols and evaluation plan were approved by Indiana University's Bloomington Campus Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the end of January 2000. Data collection for services being delivered by NACS began in the fall of 1999 and will continue for the duration of the project.

Some difficulties continue to be encountered in using the ICWIS data to track NACS program participants for possible subsequent reports of child abuse and neglect. Maureen Pirog will continue to work with Sandy Locke so that this data becomes more easily accessible while protecting client confidentiality.

Interviews with various target groups began in February 2000 and are continuing. Names and contact information for interviews with NACS staff, CPS staff, and neighborhood leaders were generated initially by Angela Greene and Susan Hoppe. At the end of neighborhood and community leader interviews, respondents have been asked to suggest other possible community contacts for interviews. In addition, other potential interviewees have been identified through a SAVI survey of community agencies in the 46222 zip code and reference to *The Rainbow Book*. Social service agencies and community organizations (such as churches) being targeted are those that serve families and children in the 46222 zip code, with the recognition that the initial interview may result in informing these agencies about the NACS program and its services, thereby increasing the potential impact of NACS and its referral base. It is important to acknowledge the potential interventive nature of these initial interviews with those who have not yet heard much about NACS, since it may be difficult to sort out the impact of the interview process itself from the activities of the NACS program in the community on the subsequent level of awareness about NACS among community members.

Potential interviewees, with the exception of program participants whose process is described below, have been telephoned by FASR staff to invite them to participate in the NACS evaluation process. Most contacted have agreed to participate in the interviews. There have been some who have yet to return calls. After several unsuccessful attempts at contact, FASR staff have not pursued some potential interviewees at this time. Attempts to interview them will be initiated again in the fall. The interviews have occurred at the location designated by the interviewee, in most cases their work place or another location where a private conversation is possible. The interviews take from 30-45 minutes depending on how verbal the interviewee is in the interview. There is one paper-and-pencil section that interviewees complete independently, and then another section with more open-ended questions posed by the interviewer.

The open-ended sections of the interviews are tape-recorded, with the respondents' permission. In addition, the interviewer takes notes on the interview protocol. Quantitative data have been entered into a database for analysis. The open-ended responses have been reviewed for common themes and issues.

Interviews conducted to date include the following:

- 6 interviews with NACS staff, including one follow-up interview with a departing staff member
- 5 interviews with CPS staff (both NACS assigned and comparison neighborhood staff)
- 19 interviews with neighborhood leaders (with one additional one scheduled)
- 4 interviews with NACS program participants
- 34 total number of interviews conducted to date

Additional interviews are planned for this fall and next spring, ending in July of 2001.

Summary of NACS Process Evaluation

Since the beginning of the NACS project, there have been 163 (as of April 2000) referrals to NACS for an average of 12.5 referrals per month. The monthly range of number of referrals has been from a low of 8 the first month of NACS operation to a high of 23 in April 2000. The monthly average number of referrals for 2000 is showing an increase over 1999 (10.7 in 1999 compared to 16.8 in 2000), thus demonstrating a steady increase in the number of referrals. Most of the referrals continue to come from CPS, either screened out or unsubstantiated cases. A total of 17 referrals (just over 10%) have been from non-CPS sources, either from community agencies or self-referrals. This number has been fairly consistent from the beginning of the project to the present.

Of the 163 referrals, 13% were inappropriate because the families lived outside the 46222 zip code or moved outside the area between the time of referral and the initial contact with NACS. Four or 2% were reassigned to CPS due to substantiated status. Thirty-six percent (59) accepted NACS services, while 21% declined NACS services at the time of referral. Twelve percent of referrals were inactive, meaning contact failed after three attempts or 45 days.

As of the end of June 2000, 47 participants have completed services with NACS. In April when 33 cases were closed, 94% or 31 cases were without any subsequent substantiated reports. Access to the ICWIS data will allow evaluation of numbers of substantiated reports among all CPS referrals, among those who NACS is unable to contact, and among those who decline services. Comparisons among these groups will provide information about the effectiveness of NACS interventions.

Performance outcomes reported at the end of April 2000 indicated that NACS is achieving most performance objectives as planned. At that time, NACS initiated contact with 98% of referrals within two days of receiving the referral. Insufficient information provided at the time of referral accounted for some of the delay. Family assessments have been completed

within an average of 12 days, instead of the anticipated 15 days. Sixty-two percent of the contacted families have accepted services, higher than the anticipated 53% acceptance rate. Accessing the agency data could provide some indication of the reasons families may have for declining services. Average time before initial face-to-face contact has been longer than anticipated, averaging almost 12 days, rather than the five days anticipated. At the last steering committee meeting, this benchmark was changed to two weeks to be more realistic given family schedules. It was noted at that time that the longer it seemed to take to make face-to-face contact with a family, the more likely it was their case would move to a substantiated one. Data on the satisfaction of “engaged” families is not yet available, with only 10 surveys returned in April.

Summary of NACS Staff Interviews

All NACS staff were interviewed in February 2000. At that time, as a group they felt positive about the potential for NACS to both reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect in the neighborhood and to increase awareness about child maltreatment problems. They rated their own skills from fair to excellent in all areas including ability to deliver child welfare services, to handle overloads, to avoid prejudgments based on ethnic or racial stereotypes, and to work effectively. They all felt they were prepared by their education and training for their positions.

In regards to their job satisfaction at that time, they felt positive about their work environment and comfortable with the work requirements. Most were not upset or depressed by their client’s problems or negative about the policies and procedures related to their work. They expressed satisfaction with their chosen careers and confidence in their work. They felt they were making a difference in people’s lives. They expressed respect for clients and agreed that they are “partners” with them. Most said the work challenging and creative in a positive sense and appreciated the variety. In general, they did not see the paperwork as excessive. There was considerable agreement about the adequacy of flexibility in time scheduling and vacation time.

There was more variation in answers to questions about the availability of supervision and access to expert consultation, with some feeling dissatisfied. They did feel, though, they had the right amount of independence in their work. It could be that they feel they need more support on some of the more difficult cases they face, but can work independently most of the time. In addition, there was more variability in the degree to which worries about work intruded on their personal time and the frequency with which they felt they had to do things on the job they felt were not right. Some agreed with these statements while others disagreed. The picture that emerges here is of a small group of people who get along fairly well in collegial atmosphere where most are satisfied with their work, though some expressed some needs for additional support in difficult circumstances.

The NACS staff was clear about the goals of NACS and identified a number of factors contributing to its potential success including: providing help to clients so they are not referred back to CPS, educating the public, having the support of the Mayor’s office, Marion County

Office of Family and Children, and other involved agencies including the community centers, and being accessible in the neighborhood.

The barriers that they identified included needing more staff for both liaison and clinical work, ignorance of the general public, some communication problems, demands of challenging cases, accessibility of some services in the neighborhood, willingness of some clients to work, and some difficulties with the CPS system.

The staff made a number of suggestions for changes including: expanding into other areas of the city beyond the current 46222 zip code, working more as a team on some of the outreach, strengthening the leadership of the organization, increasing the bilingual staff, developing more outreach to churches, drugstores, and the growing Hispanic community, sponsoring a health fair or other events to help network with other agencies, using the community centers as a base for some NACS services, and making sure that NACS is not duplicating services others are providing.

Regarding some of the potential outcomes for NACS, staff hoped for a change in the negative image of CPS as they work hand in hand together in the neighborhood. By being in the neighborhood, they think they are able to keep the lines of communication open better with the community. They also see the opportunity to develop the whole community to be a better resource for its families experiencing difficulties. Some identified the positive results already in the family team conferences that are beginning to bring agencies together around challenging family situations. While all hoped for better coordination and communication among agencies, some said they had not seen evidence of that happening yet. They see that NACS could make a significant contribution by developing its parent mentoring programs and by prioritizing children's issues in a proactive way.

Summary of CPS Interviews

Five CPS staff members were interviewed in the spring of 2000, the two assigned to the NACS office and three others for comparison purposes. Due to small numbers, they are reported as a group in order to preserve confidentiality.

These child welfare workers varied in their responses to the changes to be anticipated as a result of NACS potentially expanding to other neighborhoods. Some saw increases in workloads, investigations, and number of clients served, while others saw no change or slight decreases. Those housed with the NACS office tended to be a bit more skeptical about the ability of NACS to impact child abuse and neglect problems in the neighborhood.

They, like the NACS staff, saw themselves with fair to excellent skills in most areas, with the exception of one worker ranking him/herself as poor in paperwork clarity and another as poor in ability to network with other organizations. Unlike the NACS staff, two workers did not feel adequately trained for their present positions.

Though the numbers are small so that significant comparisons cannot be made with NACS staff responses, these child welfare workers do not appear to be experiencing as high job

satisfaction as the NACS staff. With one notable exception who is very positive about his/her work, they appear less satisfied with their working conditions and more frustrated by the paperwork demands of their jobs. They express more dissatisfaction with the amount of time they have to spend with clients and less sense of efficacy about their ability to impact their lives. They have been in their positions, on average a little over a year, not that much longer than the NACS staff. The person on the job the longest had only been there for three years, eight months.

Several knew little about NACS at the time of the interviews. Facilitating factors they identified included the cooperation of the neighborhood, becoming familiar to those in the neighborhood and therefore more approachable if there is not high staff turnover, being accessible and reducing transportation needs to get to services, the focus on mentoring services, possibility of positive word of mouth spreading the news about NACS, and open-minded staff members.

The barriers to a neighborhood-based program the child welfare workers identified included lack of financial resources, the CPS structure, possible neighborhood resistance to NACS interventions, finding the right professionals to do the work, need for more communication with community agencies, and the need for more publicity and community outreach regarding the program,

From their perspective, the positive outcomes for a program like NACS include referring families to a positive service that is community-based and well-regarded so they do not have to “worry” about their clients. Several said that NACS could help break down the negative stereotype of CPS. “People are afraid of us. NACS can work with community organizations to show that we’re not the bad guy.” They also identified strengths to include increased communication among agencies, workers becoming more familiar with neighborhood resources, perhaps decreases in caseloads for CPS, and being able to provide assistance more immediately.

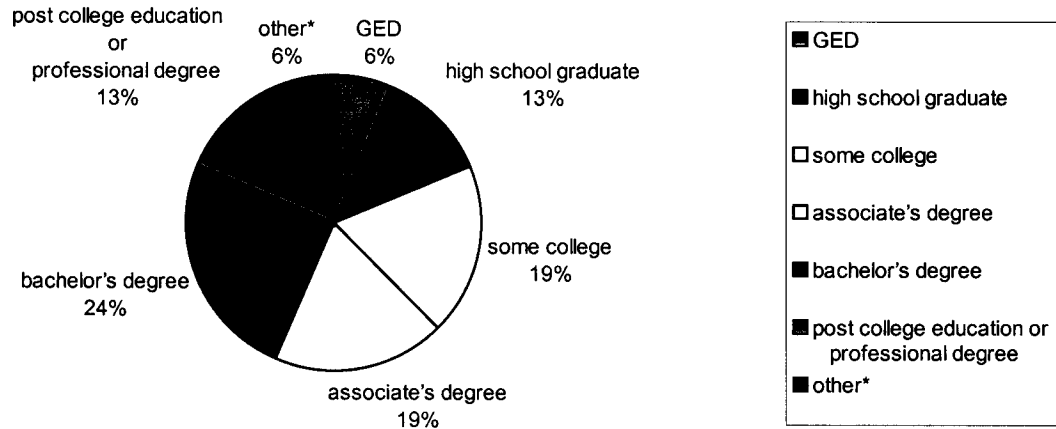
In addition, one person noted that making the neighborhood more responsible will help people take care of each other. One noted that NACS could help get more involved with the serious problem of sexual abuse.

Summary of Neighborhood and Community Leader Interviews

We conducted nineteen interviews with neighborhood and community leaders, such as directors of social service agencies, directors of daycares, neighborhood partners, a church leader, and a representative of law enforcement. These interviews lasted between half-an-hour and forty-five minutes. We asked questions about their views of the NACS program and its impact on their neighborhood.

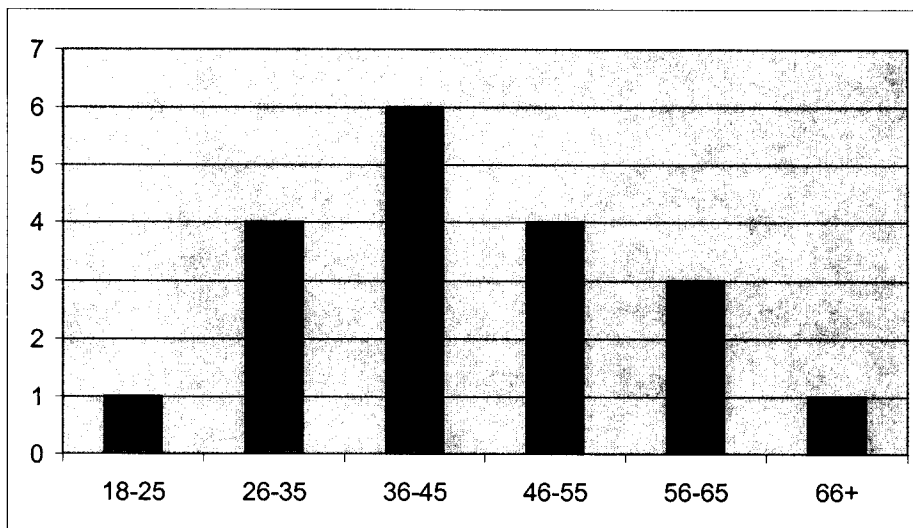
Those interviewed represented a well-educated group, with over 80% having some education past high school level (See Figure 1).

Figure 1
Education Level of Neighborhood Leaders Interviewed



Those interviewed were primarily middle-aged as can be seen in Figure 2.

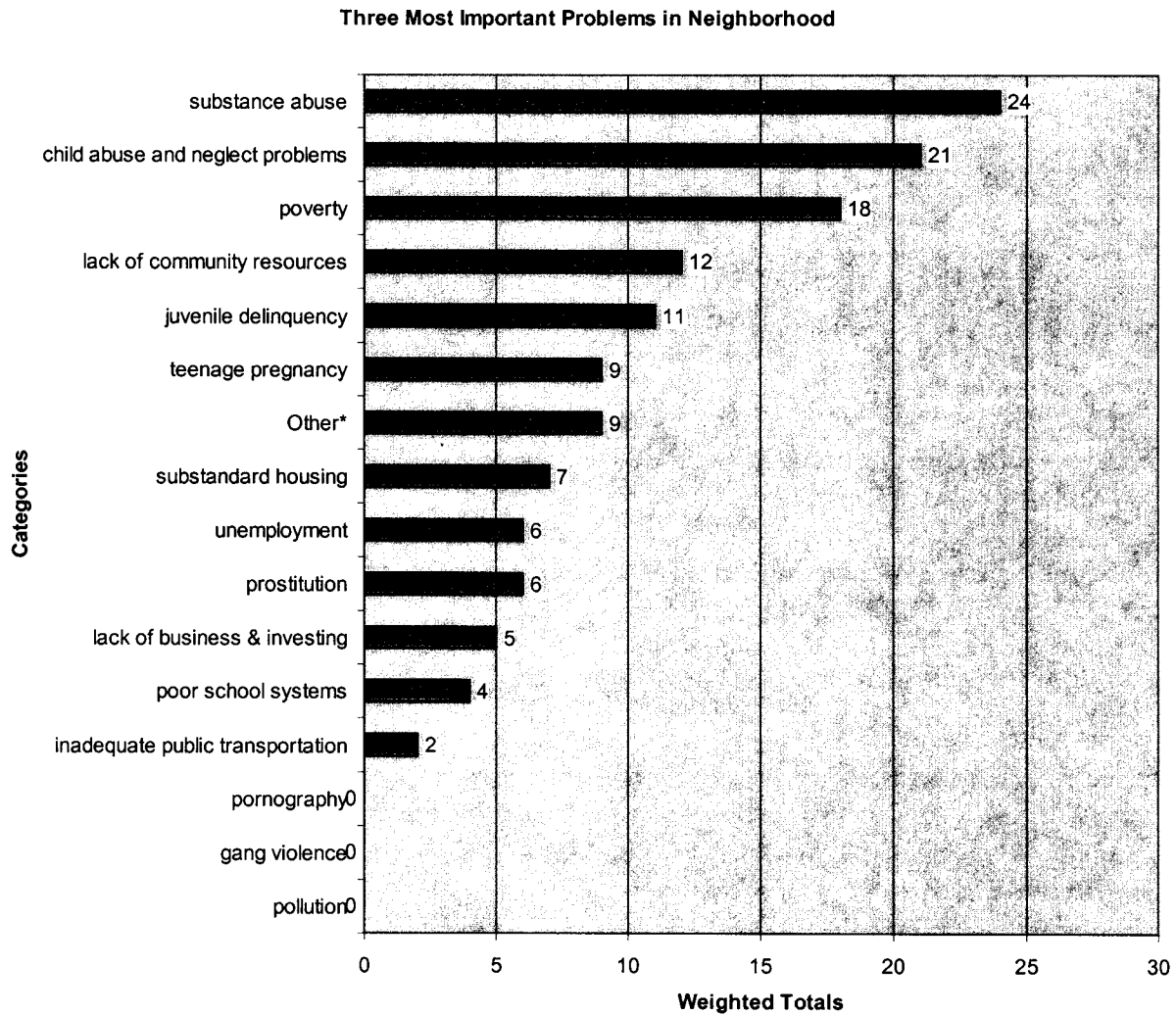
Figure 2
Ages of Neighborhood Leaders Interviewed



The neighborhood leaders interviewed had been working with families from three to 38 years, with an average of over 16 years. Half of the respondents had worked with families for at least 10 years, so this group was fairly knowledgeable about the needs of families. About one third were male and a little over a third were African American. So the respondents included some diversity of background and perspective.

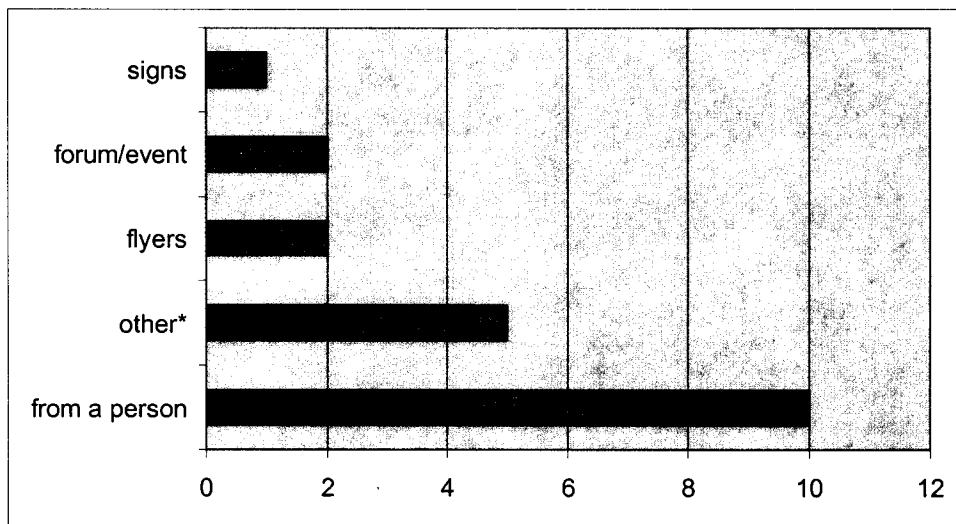
When asked to identify the three most important problems in the neighborhood, neighborhood leaders listed substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, and poverty as the three most important problems from their perspective. On a follow-up question, over half of the respondents indicated that child abuse and neglect was at least a fairly serious problem in their neighborhood. Among the three most important problems, lack of community resources and juvenile delinquency received fairly high weighted totals as well. Other problems were identified less frequently or had less importance as can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3



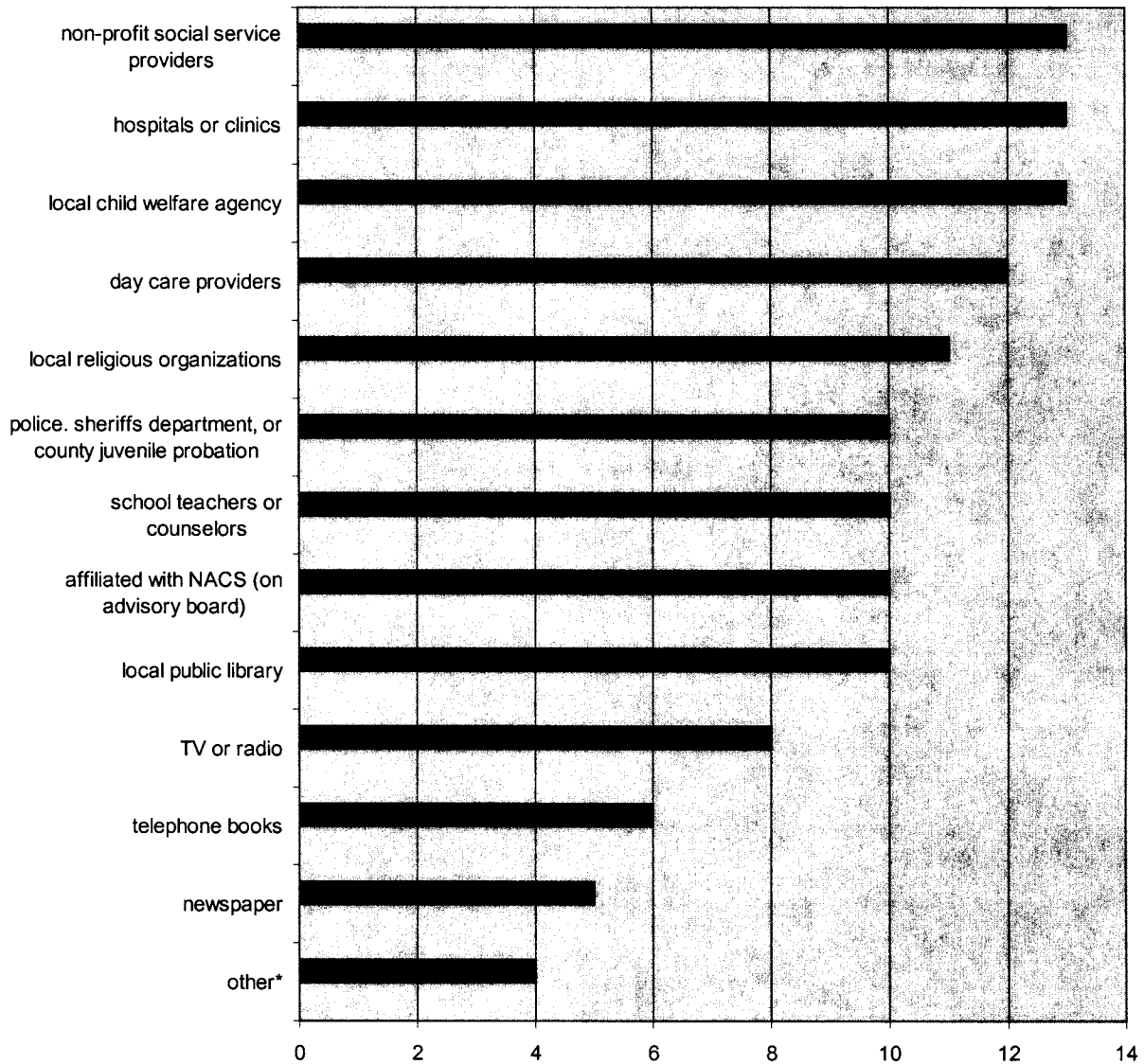
All but three of the neighborhood leaders had heard about NACS prior to the interview. When asked how they first heard about NACS, neighborhood leaders overwhelmingly stated they first hear about NACS from a person: a NACS staff member, a neighborhood leader, someone presenting at a community meeting or at an agency (see Figure 4). The “other” category also includes hearing about NACS from a person at a meeting, as well as from a report at a meeting, and from another community leader, all personal contacts. Person-to-person communication seems to be a powerful means for informing community leaders in a meaningful way about the NACS program so that they remember the services it is providing.

Figure 4
How Neighborhood Leaders First Heard of NACS



When asked, respondents indicated that neighborhood people would be most likely to find out about NACS from child welfare agencies, hospitals or clinics, non-profit social service providers, day care providers, and local religious organizations (see Figure 5 below). This group of possible referral agencies was followed closely by police and other law enforcement agencies, school teachers and counselors, those affiliated with the NACS, and the public library. Neighborhood leaders were less confident about traditional media advertising (radio, TV, and newspapers) as a vehicle for reaching potential program participants.

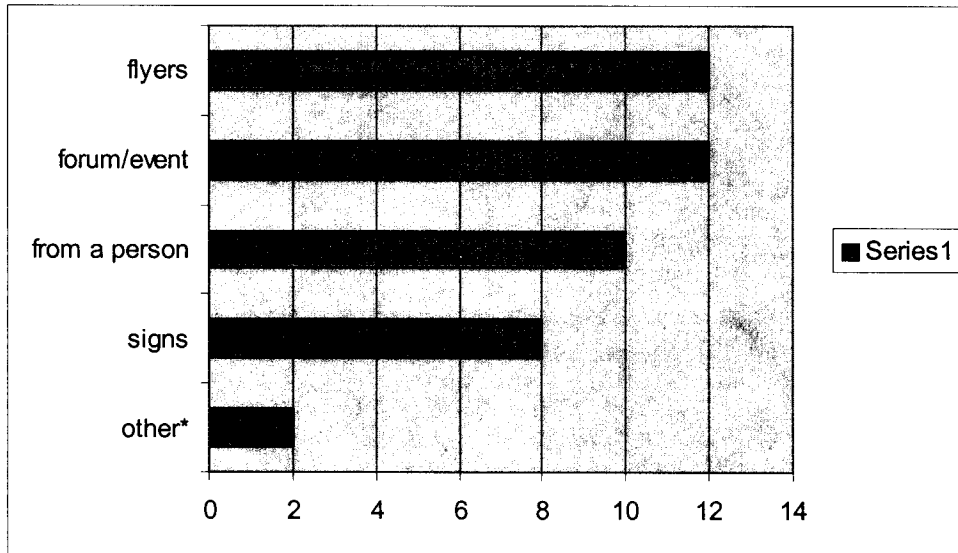
Figure 5
Sources for Families To Learn About NACS



Number of Neighborhood Leaders Identifying Source
*Other includes community meetings and other meetings director attends.

The neighborhood leaders suggested that flyers and events would be the best ways to reach potential program participants. Personal contacts were the next most frequently mentioned ways of informing people about the NACS services, as can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6
Methods for Informing about NACS



Respondents were asked to indicate their views about potential impacts that NACS may have in their neighborhood, as seen in Figure 7 below. Respondents most strongly that as a result of NACS, there would be more awareness of child abuse and neglect problems in the neighborhood and families would be more likely to use a variety of support services (all but one respondent agreeing with these statements). There was less strong agreement about the ability of NACS to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect, to help social service agencies monitor child abuse and neglect better, to increase communication and cooperation among social service agencies, and to change the way traditional child protection workers do their work (though in all cases over half of the respondents agreed with these possible outcomes). More respondents were unsure if more residents would be willing to report suspected abuse and neglect as a result of NACS's work.

Figure 7

Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	disagree	unsure	agree	strongly agree
NACS is going to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect in this neighborhood	0	1	4	9	5
NACS is going to increase awareness in the neighborhood of child abuse neglect problems	0	0	1	10	8
Residents will be more willing to report suspected child abuse and neglect	0	1	8	8	2
Social service agencies will be doing a better job of monitoring child abuse and neglect	0	1	2	13	3
NACS is going to increase communication & cooperation between social service agencies	0	2	3	9	4
NACS is going to increase family's use of support services (i.e. churches, adult education programs, day care centers, etc.)	0	0	1	14	4
NACS is going to change the way traditional child protection workers do their work.	0	1	5	8	4

In response to an open-ended question about what difference the NACS program would make in the 46222 zip code, over half of the respondents (10) agreed that, “it will reduce child abuse and neglect by making people more aware of the problem.”

- They hoped NACS would provide more services and resources for families (7)
- NACS was seen as, “an anonymous avenue to reporting child abuse...” and an alternative to CPS (4)
- NACS would provide training for parents, and thus strengthen families (3)
- NACS was viewed as an early intervention and preventative program (2)
- NACS also was seen as a way to, “let them (families) know someone cares (2)
- One person suggested that NACS could, “increase communication between social service agencies” and would fill in gaps in services (1)

When asked if they were more likely to report suspected child abuse and neglect to CPS or to NACS than before the NACS program started, the most frequent response was “yes.” The reasons they gave were as follows:

- They were more familiar with NACS (4)
- “I think that with borderline cases, it gives them somewhere to go, instead of being lost in the system” (3)
- NACS is seen as more personal than CPS, “not as official” (2)
- NACS was more helpful, “not just punitive” (1)
- NACS is viewed as more anonymous (1)

Those who said “no” (9) stated that, due to the nature of their job and their legal obligations, they already reported any suspected child abuse or neglect, and NACS had not changed their behavior in this respect.

When asked how communication and cooperation between community organizations might change as a result of the NACS program, an equal number of respondents said that NACS would help network with other agencies, not compete and would help the community become more aware of the problem (6). Other responses included:

- NACS would help get “the right people to the table” (3)
- NACS would become a resource for parents and families (3)
- NACS would help clients communicate with other agencies (4)
- NACS would be more preventative in nature than CPS (2)

Although two people did not see how NACS would change communication between community organizations, one neighborhood leader said, “Anytime we can make them aware of what’s going on it’s really on our side and it’s a big plus. Crimes are down 40% in this zip code because of partnering.”

Most interviewees responded positively when asked if they thought support services for families in their neighborhood might change as a result of the NACS program. Responses included:

- NACS would supply additional support and help to families (4)
- NACS “would increase awareness of the negative effects of child abuse on families and children.” (3)
- “There has never been a support service for this kind of thing.” (2)
- NACS would provide more confidentiality for people who would report. (2)
- NACS was more personal and comfortable (2)
- Parents would be “less likely to be abusive” due to increased parenting skills, housing, transportation, and knowledge of nutrition (1)
- Other agencies should “give the NACS program more involvement as the community centers can’t do it all” (1)
- NACS would help increase the number of people getting help (1)

Of the negative responses most stated that the area already had many resources. They feared that it would be too many “sources grabbing from the same pot.” There would be increased competition for both clients and funds (3). The some other negative response was that some people don’t like to hear about child abuse and it would “turn these people off.”

When asked their opinion of how NACS might change the traditional ways child protection workers do their work (either in attitudes or activities), the top three responses were, “NACS will bring a new, fresh, and innovative perspective to protecting children (5),” NACS

will help with CPS caseloads (5), and “NACS will have quicker response times and better attitudes (5).” Other responses included:

- “People won’t worry about NACS taking their children...they’ll know they just want to help.”

According to one community leader, NACS will “help families without a punitive nature” and “hope(fully) create an aura that CPS is actually that – child protective services.”

Other comments included:

- Angela’s very good and very involved (3)
- Broaden the area of services (1)
- NACS hasn’t realized its full potential because it’s new (1)

Summary of Program Participant Interviews

The procedure developed for contacting program participants whose cases have been closed for interviews was designed to provide client anonymity. NACS staff sent a letter to former participants indicating they would be calling to try to set up an interview with the project evaluators. At the time of the call, NACS staff encouraged former participants to agree to an interview at a neutral site, usually a community center or health center. In exchange for their time, program participants were paid \$10 for the half-hour interview. Only four parents have been interviewed to date. Some of those contacted have refused the interview, saying “we are done with NACS now.” Others have moved or have disconnected telephones, so making initial contact has been a real challenge.

Four parent interviews have been conducted following the above procedures. Given the small numbers, it would be inappropriate to generalize to the entire former participant population given these results.

All parents indicated positive changes in most of their parenting skills since their involvement with NACS. One parent felt she already had good skills in several areas before she became involved with NACS (knowing about immunizations and helping children with homework, for example), but another parent said it was like “a new life, a new beginning.”

Regarding their satisfaction with NACS services, these four parents were overwhelmingly positive. They thought their neighborhood liaisons had good ideas and treated them with respect. They felt they were treated as individuals who were encouraged to ask questions and set their own goals. They felt their neighborhood liaisons were sensitive to their race and heritage and knowledgeable about children and families. They could depend on them for help and support. They felt the services provided helped their families. They would return to NACS for services in the future if they felt they needed them.

In terms of problems pressing on them at the time of the interview, three of the four identified negative neighborhood influence as a serious problem, two identified lack of money as a serious problem, and one identified each of the following as serious problems: inadequate housing, marital conflict, medical problems of a child, and mental or emotional problems of a child. One parent identified 5 problems as serious.

All of the parents described their situations as better since their NACS involvement. One parent said that her children are now hanging out with other children who are a more positive influence. Another said that since the liaison taught her how to balance her checkbook, she is not bouncing checks any more. She said, too, that learning about “time out” has helped her with disciplining her children. Another mother said she has learned more patience and how her actions affect her children. Now she “doesn’t fly off the handle as easy” and she has learned to “cool off.” The last parent said that now her family gets along; they play; they go to church a lot, and ride bikes when it’s warm outside. In this way, NACS has made significant differences in the quality of these families’ lives. Even though some problems persist (this same mother still has to go to court a lot since her oldest son gets into trouble), things are better than they were at the time of referral.

When asked how NACS had helped, the parents said they appreciated the counseling from NACS on parenting and relationships and the referrals to other agencies for additional services. Learning how to get along in their families and how to help their children learn these same skills seemed important to two of the parents. Just “being there” was important as well.

None of the parents had any dissatisfaction to report. One suggested that more offices like NACS would be helpful to other parents in other neighborhoods.

Three of the parents are now using additional community resources for counseling or additional food (a church food bank). The other parent says, though she is not using any additional resources at this time, she now knows what is out there in case she does need them in the future.

The personal support and attention these parents receive, messages that say they are valued, may be just as important as the specific skills they learn or the new community resources they find as a result of their participation with NACS. This program participant evaluation strongly suggests the importance of the ability of the neighborhood liaison to engage NACS parents in the intervention process as a key to its success. Care must continue to be taken in identifying people with strong interpersonal skills to fill these important roles.

Challenges and Proposed Changes in the Evaluation Procedures

We have been unsuccessful in increasing our number of interviews with parents following the previously discussed protocols. We are proposing to change those procedures prior to initiating our next round of interviews this fall. At the time of the initial assessment with families, the evaluation interview will be mentioned as a way that NACS is trying to get feedback to improve its services. In this way, program participants will understand the evaluation from the beginning of their receiving services from the agency. After their case has been closed, NACS staff will send out a letter indicating that FASR staff will be calling to conduct a phone interview. NACS staff will then give FASR staff the names and phone numbers for participants whose cases have been closed. FASR staff will then contact program participants by phone. Every effort will be made to conduct the half-hour interview at the time of initial phone contact. Interviewees will be paid \$25 for their time. The logistics of that payment are still to be determined. For those with no phones, the written letter from NACS

will request a call from the participant to arrange for a face-to-face interview. While client anonymity cannot be protected using this procedure, we can still reassure interviewees of confidentiality of the information that they share. If the Steering Committee agrees with this change in procedure, or suggests an alternative one, FASR will secure the necessary clearances through Indiana University to implement the new evaluation plan.

In addition, this interim evaluation provides the opportunity for NACS and its Steering Committee to suggest any other changes in the evaluation plan that could be implemented in the coming year. Suggestions of target groups for interviews or other data gathering strategies are welcome, as well as specific evaluation questions that may need to be added to the existing protocols.

In the evaluation, we plan to include more church leaders, day care providers, and medical personnel in the next round of interviews with community leaders. We could use the Steering Committee's assistance in identifying members of the Hispanic community for interviews.

Lastly, we will be conducting follow-up interviews with NACS staff and CPS workers this fall for time comparison purposes.

Interim Recommendations for NACS

Based on the information gathered to date, the following interim recommendations are made at this time:

Outreach and Referral Suggestions:

1. Continue personal outreach efforts particularly to those agencies and organizations identified by respondents as likely information sources for potential program participants. Though such contacts are labor-intensive and time-consuming, they may yield better results in terms of informing community leaders about the services available from NACS.
2. Place NACS flyers in places where potential program participants are likely to see them.
3. Increase Hispanic representation and integration of resources for Hispanics to encourage more of their participation.
4. Follow up with initial contacts. One neighborhood leader said, "I had good initial contact with NACS, but haven't heard anything since" and didn't even know if it was still going until we called for an interview.
5. Have another "update" fair, like in the beginning, to provide more publicity about the program.

Internal Operations:

1. Conduct staff assessment to determine their training and supervision needs regarding difficult cases.
2. Monitor caseloads to make sure that staff job satisfaction and sense of efficacy with clients continues to be positive.
3. Continue to foster clear communication using appropriate channels among the Steering Committee, Children's Bureau, NACS staff and Marion County Office of Family and Children so that any difficulties are minimized.
4. Continue to hire neighborhood liaisons with strong interpersonal skills who can engage clients in the change process.