



# Lessons from an urban school readiness initiative:

Including family, friend, and neighbor care providers

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# Context

- Citywide urban school readiness initiative
- Focus on families not connected to educational and service systems; low income and newcomers
- Engage and connect Family, Friend and Neighbor Care Providers (FFNC) with neighborhood school readiness activities
  - FFNC: a critical, but often neglected, component of a comprehensive strategy to promote school readiness

# Research Questions

- Characteristics of providers and the caregiving arrangement
- How are FFNC providers engaged?
- What benefits and impacts do FFNC providers report from participation?
- How do the community, neighborhood, and parent partners view identification, outreach, and engagement of FFNC providers?

# Case Study Methods/Data

Participants	Type of Data Collected	Individuals
<b>FFNC Providers</b> engaged in the initiative	Interviews: 8 Focus Group (15 participants)	23
Neighborhood School Readiness <b>Program Directors</b>	Interviews	5
<b>“Parent Partners”</b> working with School Readiness Program	Focus Group	14
<b>Steering Committee</b> of School Readiness Program	Focus Groups	5 meetings

# Who Were the FFNC Providers?

- Focus group with 15 Vietnamese grandmothers
- Interviews with 8 African American, Chinese, Latina, and Bangladeshi providers who were grandmothers, grandfathers, neighbors; Conducted in Spanish, Bengali, English.
  - 90% are related to the child/children (grandparents)
  - Care for 1 -2 children
  - Care provided during weekdays, and also evenings, overnights, weekends (whenever parents are working)

# Results: How are FFNC Providers Identified & Engaged?

- Community-organizing approach, led by Parent Partners
- Engagement included: Participation in play groups, library story time, field trips, support groups

# Results: Why FFNC Providers Chose to Participate

- Many perceived benefits:
  - Learning: child development, discipline, nutrition, raising children in the U.S.
  - Social connections
    - “I only have this group. I just came to America a few months ago, I don't know streets, and everything is strange and very different. I go out but it's too scary. I don't dare to go anywhere. [People] call me but I can't go. I don't know how to get to my destination, there are cars, I'm scared, so I don't go anywhere much. Just this [grandmothers] group.”

# Results: Why FFNC Providers Chose to Participate (Cont.)

- Community connection and pride

“Before [this initiative] I lived in this community but I really didn’t do much of anything with my community. Now just learning about all the different activities or events or things that I didn’t know about before that were going on in my community that I was not aware of, it’s made me more aware of the good things in my community that you never hear about.

You always hear about the bad things that’s going on but you never hear about the good things and it’s given me a broader sense of connection to my neighbors, my communities, to the activities that are there for the children as well as activities that are there in the sense to help parents and the resources that are right next door to you that you didn’t even know were there.”



# Results: Mixed Perspectives by Neighborhood Partners

- 3 of 5 neighborhoods did not engage FFNC
  1. FFNC is a community resource, a strength, part of natural family support networks, represents the rich diversity of the neighborhood
    - Engage through a family support approach
  2. FFNC is a liability, illegal, a distraction from the focus on school readiness that should be directed to formal early learning programs
    - Should be discouraged or engaged to professionalize as a licensed FCC provider

# Discussion: Lessons Learned

- Tension about engaging FFNC providers
  - Barrier to achieving their goals with FFNC providers.
- Address perceptions of the value of FFNC to establish a shared commitment and understanding of the value and potential benefits of such a strategy.

# Discussion: Lessons Learned

- Engaging this population required trusted community “brokers” or members who have access to informal extended family and community networks.
- FFNC providers self-reported impact on the quality of the caregiving and early learning environment
- Feasible and potentially effective approach

# What do you think?

- Policy/Practice: How can we draw from strengths across programs to support children in all settings (e.g., home visiting, online, etc)?
- Research: What do we need to be able to more effectively study these HBCC providers?
- Overall question: what are the implications for system-building?