FAMILY SUPPORT

TECHNICAL SUPPORT MANUALS

Module 1

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER COALITION OF NEBRASKA INC.

Family Resource Center Coalition of Nebraska Technical Support Manuals — Module 1: Family Support:

These materials were adapted with permission from Family Support America (FSA), formerly the Family Resource Coalition of America. The materials originally appeared in their *Guidelines for Family Support Practice* published in Chicago, IL, 1996.

For additional copies of this module, contact Family Resource Center Coalition of Nebraska Inc., 6949 South 110th Street, Omaha NE 68128. PDF copies are available online at http://www.frccn.org.

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER COALITION OF NEBRASKA

HISTORY

Family Resource Centers are family-focused community collaborations that strengthen and preserve families and individual members within the community. Accordingly, they coordinate and support human service programs that encourage self-sufficiency of the family unit.

On July 20, 1993, family resource center coordinators and directors from across Nebraska met at Whitehall Family Resource Center in Lincoln. From this meeting, the Family Resource Center Coalition of Nebraska Inc. (FRCCN) formed.

FRCCN is a nonprofit consulting and advocacy organization working to support Nebraska's children and families. They support the existing family resource center network by sharing information and resources. They work to expand the network by providing technical assistance to interested communities. Through the family support movement, FRCCN seeks to strengthen and empower family and community practices that foster optimal development of children, youth and adult family members.

MISSION

To articulate, develop and promote attitudes that strengthen and support families by providing resources, technical assistance and networking; and by being an advocate for quality Family Resource Centers.

PURPOSE

To provide a network of communication and coordination for family resource centers throughout Nebraska; encourage the development of research based on issues relating to family resource centers; articulate, develop and promote attitudes that strengthen and support families; and educate the public regarding the aims and accomplishments of family.

ACTIVITIES

The FRCCN state office strives to heighten public awareness of the importance of coordinated, multidisciplinary, community-based family services. Accordingly, staff and members work with communities to initiate and develop family resource centers. Staff and members provide technical support throughout the development process.

As a focal point for fiscal support, FRCCN and local members work with numerous public and private sector representatives at the national, state and local level. FRCCN coordinates funding and support across agencies and programs related to family resource centers, child and family support efforts, and comprehensive community planning. This ensures efficient and effective utilization of scarce resources.

INTRODUCTION

## TECHNICAL SUPPORT MANUALS

These step-by-step, technical support modules can build the capacity of your local program to:
⇒ Define family support and family resource centers (Module 1);
⇒ Understand the basic principles and philosophies of family support (Module 1);
⇒ Differentiate between traditional service strategies and family support strategies (Module 1);
⇒ Know the history, influences and underpinnings of family support (Module 1);
⇒ Undertake a community assessment process (Module 2);
⇒ Determine the specific community concerns best addressed through a family support program or center (Module 2);
⇒ Determine the mission or purpose of a program or center (Module 3);
⇒ Design a core set of services and staffing pattern (Module 3);
⇒ Build an administrative and board structure for family resource centers (Module 3);
⇒ Construct a family resource center facility (Module 4); and
⇒ Design effective information and referral strategies (Module 5).

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Based on your experiences, knowledge and expertise, you will undoubtedly determine other areas that require technical assistance, supplemental tools and materials, intensive training sessions, or peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities with established family resource centers.
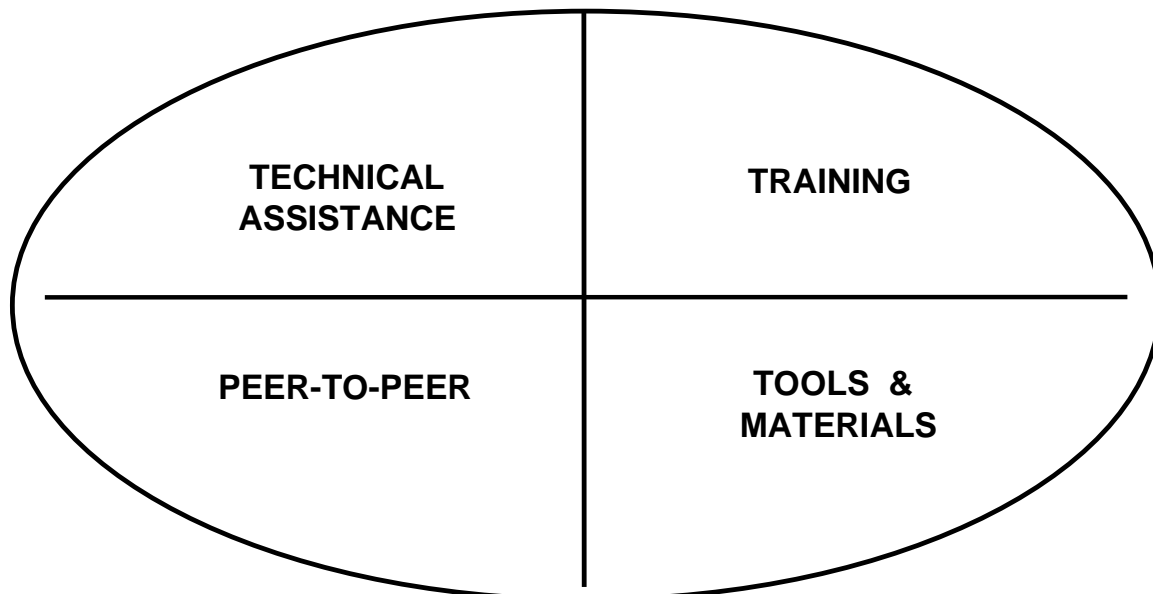
Please contact the Family Resource Center Coalition of Nebraska Inc. (FRCCN) to discuss your need for supplemental information. Our extensive resource library and services network can provide helpful contacts. FRCCN is also open to developing new forms of technical assistance to help communities meet existing service gaps.

FAMILY SUPPORT
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THE FAMILY SUPPORT MOVEMENT

Family support seeks to strengthen and empower families and communities so they can foster the optimal development of children, youth and adult family members. To accomplish this, family support advocates a fundamentally different societal response to the challenges impacting children, youth and their families. These families, despite all barriers, are trying to do the most important job in America - raising our next generation of learners, workers and citizens. Thus, family support programs are unified under one essential concept - helping parents deal with the day to day difficulties of child rearing. Programs combine current knowledge about child development, family systems and community impact on families to develop more effective ways to promote healthy child development. Today, family support represents thousands of community-based programs dedicated to supporting families in their efforts to raise healthy children.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Family support is not a particular set of programs and services. Nor is it the building that houses the services or the staff that work with families. Rather family support involves a commitment to change all services by making them available to all families (not just those "at risk") and emphasizing prevention (not crisis intervention). There are three key aspects to family support.

Family Support is a set of beliefs and an approach to strengthening and empowering families and communities so that they foster the optimal development of children, youth and adult family members.

Family Support is a shift in how agencies and organizations do their work and interact with families and communities. Family support beliefs guide and shape health, education, and human service systems and organizations to be more preventive, community-based, culturally competent, flexible, family-focused, strengths-based, and comprehensive.

Family Support is a type of grassroots, community-based program that provides resources for families. These programs have proliferated in neighborhoods across the country since the early 1970s. They continue to refine their practices and inform the field about quality in family support services.

These three key aspects of family support are discussed below.

FAMILY SUPPORT IS — A Set of Beliefs

Family Support is a set of beliefs and an approach to strengthening and empowering families and communities so that they foster the optimal development of children, youth and adult family members.

Family support is not a program — it is a philosophy. When people talk about family support, they refer to various strategies that recreate, strengthen, help and support **every** family. The common objective is to raise healthy, productive children and to prevent problems associated with family breakdown, such as child abuse, teen pregnancy, and school failure. The family support philosophy is grounded in a set of widely accepted premises and principles outlining ways to successfully raise children in this society. These seven Premises of Family Support Programs and nine Principles of Family Support Practice are listed and discussed below.

Premises of Family Support Programs

The following seven premises reflect the values and beliefs underlying all family support programs. They form the philosophical basis of all family support efforts — regardless of the actual program activities.

1. Primary responsibility for the development and well being of children lies within the family, and all segments of society must support families as they rear their children.

The systems and institutions upon which families rely must effectively respond to their needs if families are to establish and maintain environments that promote growth and development. Achieving this requires a society that is committed to making the well-being of children and families a priority and to supporting that commitment by the allocation and provision of necessary resources.

2. Assuring the well-being of all families is the cornerstone of a healthy society, and requires universal access to support programs and services.

A national commitment to promoting the healthy development of families acknowledges that every family, regardless of race, ethnic background, or economic status, needs and deserves a support system. Since no family can be self-sufficient, the concept of reaching families before problems arise is not realized unless all families are reached. To do so requires a public mandate to make family support accessible and available, on a voluntary basis, to all.

3. Children and families exist as part of an ecological system.

An ecological approach assumes that child and family development is embedded within broader aspects of the environment, including a community with cultural, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics that are affected by the values and policies of the larger society. This perspective assumes that children and families are influenced by interactions with people, programs and agencies as well as by values and policies that may help or hinder families' ability to promote their members' growth and development. The ecological context in which families operate is a critical consideration in programs' efforts to support families.

4. Child-rearing patterns are influenced by parents' understandings of child development and of their children's unique characteristics, personal sense of competence, and cultural and community traditions and mores.

There are multiple determinants of parents' child-rearing beliefs and practices, and each influence is connected to other influences. For example, a parent's view of her or his child's disposition is related to the parent's cultural background and knowledge of child development and to characteristics of the child. Since the early years set a foundation for the child's development, patterns of parent-child interaction are significant from the start. The unique history of the parent-child relationship is important to consider in program efforts.

5. Enabling families to build on their own strengths and capacities promotes the healthy development of children.

Family support programs promote the development of competencies and capacities that enable families and their members to have control over important aspects of their lives and to relate to their children more effectively. By building on strengths, rather than treating deficits, programs assist parents in dealing with difficult life circumstances as well as in achieving their goals, and in doing so, enhance parents' capacity to promote their children's healthy development.

6. The developmental processes that make up parenthood and family life create needs that are unique at each stage in the life span.

Parents grow and change in response to changing circumstances and to the challenges of nurturing a child's development. The tasks of parenthood and family life are ongoing and complex, requiring physical, emotional and intellectual resources. Many tasks of parenting are unique to the needs of a child's developmental stage, others are unique to the parent's point in her or his life cycle. Parents have been influenced by their own childhood experiences and their own particular psychological characteristics, and are affected by their past and present family interactions.

7. Families are empowered when they have access to information and other resources and take action to improve the well-being of children, families and communities.

Equitable access to resources in the community—including up-to-date information and high-quality services that address health, educational and other basic needs—enables families to develop and foster optimal environments for all members. Meaningful experiences of participating in programs and influencing policies strengthen existing capabilities and promote the development of new competencies in families, including the ability to advocate on their own behalf.

Principles of Family Support Practice

The above beliefs are further evidenced in the principles of family support. These principles guide how family support programs implement the family support premises. They reflect the attributes and elements common to effective programs. These principles were developed by Family Support America (FSA), formerly the Family Resource Coalition of America.

1. Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.

An effective, empowering relationship between families and the family resource program staff member is the essential foundation on which all other elements of family support practice are built. Establishing a true partnership between families and staff takes time, skill, and commitment on the part of practitioners and extensive support from programs.

2. Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members - adults, youth and children.

The healthy development of children is dependent on the healthy development of families. When programs promote optimal development, they assume that there is already a process of growth and development under way in families, and that families already possess certain skills, knowledge and resources. The role of family support programs is to help families identify, enhance and utilize those existing skills, knowledge and resources.

3. Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs, and to communities.

Families are resources to themselves because they impart to children their culture, history, beliefs, values and a sense of belonging, and point the child toward the identity that he or she develops. They are resources to other families through their natural informal network of extended family, neighbors, friends and co-workers who reciprocally provide support in times of need. Finally for programs, they can be resources, mentors and advocates for other families, volunteers for program activities, and board members.

4. Policies and practices affirm and strengthen families' ethnic, racial and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multicultural society.

Families are the primary vehicles through which traditions, values and languages are passed from generation to generation. Programs and policies should honor and respect the cultural beliefs, interpersonal styles, attitudes and behaviors of families and are responsive to the cultural context in which families live and raise their children. Programs and policies that respect cultural beliefs find ways to use those beliefs as strengths that can be built upon.

5. Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.

Family support programs have always acknowledged the impact of the community on the families who live there and on the development of their children. Programs in recent years have expanded beyond the role of service providers and have actively worked to promote the health and well-being of their neighborhoods and communities. They have also begun to take a leadership role in identifying and advocating for changes that need to be made in public service systems to make them more responsive to the needs of families.

6. Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.

As leaders in their communities, family support programs are responsible for articulating a vision of services that are inclusive, equitable, just, responsive and accountable to families. Family support programs strive to be more than providers of prevention and remedial services. Their aim is to promote the well-being of children and families in every possible way. Parents depend on schools, healthcare and child-care providers, and other public and private sources of support to help them give their children full opportunities for growth and development. Parents have a vested interest in the quality of these systems and the right to hold them accountable for providing what their children need.

7.   Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.

While high-quality formal resources (schools, parks, substance abuse treatment, doctors, and religious groups) are vital to families when they need them, informal resources (friends, co-workers, neighbors, and relatives) are equally important. Communities depend on their informal networks of resources to support individual members and to create a shared sense of community. Family support programs work to foster "interdependencies among community members in ways that promote the flow of resources to (and from) families."

8.   Programs are flexible and continually responsive to family and community issues.

Family support programs need to respond quickly to what they are learning about their families; if they do not they risk becoming irrelevant and ineffective. Since family support practice is based on close relationships and functional partnerships with families, programs are well positioned to continuously learn from their "customers" in their design and administration.

9.   Principles of family support are modeled in all program activities, including planning, governance and administration.

Effective family support practice depends on a program environment that integrates family support principles into every aspect of the program's operation. The program's design and implementation over time, their governance and administration, reflect the approach to families and communities expressed in all other practice principles.

FAMILY SUPPORT IS — A Shift in Service Provision

Family Support is a shift in how agencies and organizations do their work and interact with families and communities. Family support beliefs guide and shape health, education, and human service systems and organizations to be more preventive, community-based, culturally competent, flexible, family-focused, strengths-based, and comprehensive.

Each year American taxpayers reach deep into their pockets to meet the costs — both direct and indirect — of policies intended to ameliorate the suffering of families in crisis. If we continue along this current path, these costs will escalate. But our families will pay an even greater price. Without change, an increasing number of children will grow up with few skills, scant opportunities, limited knowledge, tenuous connections to family and society, and little hope.

In this time of dwindling resources, it is difficult to stem the rising tide of public skepticism over social services. Many Americans believe these services drain resources without making a difference. Others believe they lessen parents' control of and influence on their own children.

Turning our collective back on families, either on fiscal or ideological grounds, isn't the answer - it's part of the problem. America can and should help our families prevent crises from developing in the first place. This way, we can avoid the costs produced when family members go to prison, enter foster care, or drop out of school. We must abandon the current crisis-oriented system, which deals with problems after they occur, for a proactive one.

Faced with escalating budgets for compensatory, remediation and protective services, entrepreneurial policymakers are exploring ways to reform and improve services. By investing thousands of dollars in early prevention, they plan to save hundreds of thousands of dollars down the road. This prevention strategy is family support. The idea is to infuse family support values and approaches into public health, public welfare, education, child welfare, mental health, and juvenile justice. Such infusion will dramatically change the way teachers teach, child welfare workers protect children from harm, and mental health professionals work with families.

For example, family support views welfare dependence as a result of various factors — lack of childcare, poor job training, inadequate transportation, health concerns, alcohol or drug dependence, and physical or psychological problems resulting from abuse. Innovative programs throughout the nation are reforming this welfare system. They are offering all families the different types of support they need to be economically self-sufficient **and** be safe and healthy. These services include day care, job training, transportation, health care, counseling, and legal assistance. Family-supportive welfare reform initiatives understand that AFDC recipients need more than a job. To successfully get off welfare, families need a realistic array of support.

Redesigning services to reflect a family support approach is crucial to the success of our families. It will involve new and closer partnerships between public and private entities at the national, state and local level.

Effective Programs versus Prevailing Systems

Attributes of Effective Programs	Undermined by Attributes of Prevailing Systems
comprehensive, flexible	*fragmented, categorical funding*
responsive and individualized	*rule-driven and standardized*
front-line worker discretion	*minimal discretion*
preventive, inclusive, strength-based	*crisis orientation, deficit-based eligibility and responses*
shaped by client needs	*shaped by agency needs*
non-bureaucratic climate	*bureaucratic climate*
collaboration across systems and disciplines	*narrowly defined professional responsibilities*
family focus	*categorical training*
outcome-oriented accountability	*input-regulated accountability*
rooted in community	*rigid and conflicting eligibility requirements*
emphasis on relationships of mutual trust	*large case loads*
evolving ,relentless problem-solving	*unchanging over time*

FAMILY SUPPORT IS — Community-Based

Family support is a type of grassroots, community-based program that provides resources for families. These programs have proliferated in neighborhoods across the country since the early 1970s. They continue to refine their practices and inform the field about quality in family support services.

While there are great differences among family support programs, all pursue similar goals and incorporate similar services and activities. Most importantly, all family support programs value, respect and empower parents. They acknowledge the hard work parents are undertaking. They recognize parents' struggles and achievements. They honor families' cultural and ethnic heritages. And they help parents obtain the knowledge and resources they need to raise healthy children who will become productive adults.

Family support programs turn traditional social services on its head.

- Programs focus on the entire family in the context of its culture and community, rather than just the individual.
- Programs give priority to the delivery of community-based, promotion-oriented, and comprehensive services, rather than fragmented and problem-specific crisis interventions.
- Programs emphasize the strengths, skills and abilities that enable and empower families to solve problems and achieve goals, rather than focusing on weaknesses and the amelioration of deficits.
- Programs place families in a primary role in the planning, design and delivery of services, rather than expecting them to fit into a predetermined set of service options.

Family support programs provide services, activities and referrals so all families get what they need when they need it. They do not allow eligibility requirements to prevent families from receiving needed help, resources and support. The specific program content and structure are determined by the needs of the families being served and are designed to complement existing community services and resources.

Those who work with families continue to share their developing knowledge and advocate for renewed national recognition of the essential and primary role families play in raising the next generation. As a result, family support programs are proliferating across the country. This national grassroots movement by practitioners working in community-based programs is making a positive difference in the lives of thousands of families.

THE NEED FOR FAMILY SUPPORT

A CHANGING WORLD

Today, times are tough for many families. Dramatic changes have occurred in the structure and patterns of family life in the United States and Nebraska. (For statistical data, see Appendix 1: Quick Facts on the Challenges We Face.)

Economic changes place families under increasing stress. In America, real wages (adjusted for inflation) have declined since 1973. Today, both parents must work outside the home to maintain a middle class standard of living. In Nebraska, we lead the nation in the number of families where both parents are in the labor force. As a result, parents feel overwhelmed balancing work and family life. And their children miss them just as they miss their children.

Pressures on single-parent families have intensified. Today, female-headed households are an indicator of poverty. Children in single-parent families lack access to economic, housing or human resources available to children in two-parent families. The increase in single parent families is linked to the birthrate among teenagers, as teen births are often out-of-wedlock births. Unfortunately, adults from single-parent households are apt to experience a lower socioeconomic status. Poverty is not just an economic state - it also predicts many negative health, education and social outcomes.

Many neighborhoods are not providing a safe, supportive environment for families. Traditional support systems are disappearing from our communities. These systems include networks of extended family members, religious organizations, friends and neighbors. Meantime, the challenges facing parents and children have increased. Moreover, fragmented, categorical and crisis-oriented service systems inhibit a family's ability to access the support and services it needs.

American children are at risk now like never before. Too many new mothers do not receive timely prenatal care. Increasingly, our young children fall below the poverty line. Mothers worry

at the level of street violence, while the number of children reported abused or neglected has tripled since 1981. Alcohol and smoking rates are high for pre-teens.

Public expenditures in America are not prevention oriented. Ironically, America's resources address the consequences of poor outcomes rather than prevent or correct these outcomes early in life. Money goes to meet basic needs, ensure public protection, and provide compensatory and rehabilitation services – not family support. The cost of business as usual is too high for American children and families.

TRADITIONAL SERVICE SYSTEM INADEQUACIES

Increasingly, we recognize our federal, state and local human service systems fail to adequately address the multiple challenges facing today's families. Our traditional response system is a perplexing web of social service agencies at the federal, state and local levels. These services act incongruently, using individual budgets, objectives, service guidelines and rules, and eligibility requirements. Family support programs address seven key deficiencies in our traditional social service system.

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Crisis Oriented

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- **Services are crisis oriented.** They are designed to address problems that have already occurred rather than offer support to prevent difficulties from developing in the first place.

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Categorical

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- **Systems divide the problems of children and families into rigid and distinct categories that fail to reflect inter-related causes and solutions.** Services designed to respond to discrete problems (commonly referred to as categorical problems) are administered by literally dozens of agencies. Each has its

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particular focus, funding source, guidelines, and accountability requirements. Even though a child and his or her family may need a mix of health, education, child welfare, or other services, separate and often conflicting eligibility guidelines work against comprehensive service delivery. Thus, services are provided within, rather than across, service categories.

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Lack of Coordination

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- **The current system is uncoordinated and lacks functional communication among the various public and private agencies that comprise it.** Agencies with pronounced dissimilarities in professional orientation and institutional mandates seldom see each other as allies. Operating like ships

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passing in the night, agencies fail to draw on services available throughout the community that might complement one another.

Inflexible	• **Many services are rigidly defined and inflexible, although families may need individually tailored supports to succeed.** A "one size fits all" mentality rarely matches the unique needs of an individual family. Particularly when assisting families along pathways to self-sufficiency, programs must start from where the

family is, rather than set uniform requirements that may not match many families' situations.

Fragmented	• **Current systems frequently fail to craft comprehensive solutions to complex problems, even when the resources are available to do it.** Existing staff typically represent only a narrow slice of the professional talent and expertise needed to plan, finance, and implement the multiple services characteristic of

successful interventions.

Remote	• **Current systems fail to recognize or draw upon individual, family and community assets in supporting children and families.** Current systems take a deficit approach to working with individuals and families. They fail to draw upon and help people connect with natural support networks, including faith

communities and volunteer organizations. Services are remote from the real lives of those they serve and not embedded within the communities they serve. Often, they are culturally insensitive.

Unilateral	• **Current systems often address children and families as recipients of service rather than participants in their and their community's growth.** By failing to partner with families, traditional services often take a position of "the professional knows best." This is demeaning to those they serve. Ultimately,

this approach may foster dependency rather than self-sufficiency.

As a result of these realities, there is a growing population of children with neither the capacity nor the stamina to arrive at school ready to learn. More adults are ill equipped to compete in a highly skilled job-market, and an emerging underclass of families is in danger of falling farther behind - trapped in a cycle of poverty. Ironically, this means more families need support just when fewer family members are able to provide support. Without a systems change, American families and children remain at risk for a wide variety of dysfunctions, including becoming both victims and future perpetrators of abuse, neglect and violence.

NEW RESEARCH — NEW PARADIGM

Dramatic societal changes and dissatisfaction with the traditional service system occurred as researchers in psychology, sociology, health, and other fields documented the importance of the first three years of life for human development and success in later years. Those who sought to improve outcomes for children had previously concentrated only on children. Now, they began to understand that the best way to "save the child" was to serve the parents, who, they were learning, played a crucial role in their children's development into adults.

Studies now confirm that supportive networks contribute greatly to all parents' ability to raise their children. The research corroborates what is common sense to most of us:

> When programs and services reach parents early, children benefit. Effective interventions can positively influence the long-term parent-child relationship and prevent such problems as low birth weight, child abuse and neglect, cognitive impairment, and other problems that prevent children from developing optimally.

> When parents are more connected to other families in their communities, their children benefit. Helping networks have a positive effect on parents' ability to deal with stress, mothers' perceptions of themselves and their children, fathers' involvement in child rearing, and children's self-esteem and school success.

> When people feel responsible for what happens in their neighborhoods, children benefit. Although cohesive neighborhoods cannot negate all of the effects of poverty on families, they can decrease the incidence of violence and crime - providing the role models and protective environment that all children need.

Given the realities of a changing society, the failure of traditional service systems and new field research, a new paradigm arose. **This model is called family support.**

THE FAMILY SUPPORT RESPONSE

Where they exist, family support programs are non-stigmatizing – services are available to all families in a community, not just families identified as "at risk." This recognizes that parenting is a difficult job and seeking help is a sign of strength and intelligence – not weakness or failure. Thus, family support programs provide a nurturing system of support when and where families need it. In this respect, family support mimics extended families and informal neighborhood networks.

Family support programs share the goal of empowering and strengthening adults in their roles as parents, nurturers and providers. They fulfill this purpose in various ways. Many programs are comprehensive and provide a range of social, educational and recreational activities. Others provide a single service, such as telephone support or parenting classes. Some programs serve specific populations, such as parents, teenagers or new parents. Others support families as they experience specific life events, such as teen pregnancy, divorce, family crisis, and relocation. Some are staffed by professionals, some by paraprofessionals, some by volunteers, and some by all three. Family support programs emerge under different auspices. They may be private, nonprofit human service endeavors, freestanding fully independent programs; or part of larger structures, such as schools and hospitals.

Making a Difference

Family Support Services	Traditional Support Services
Help to prevent crises by meeting needs early	*Intervene after crises occur and needs intensify*
Offer help meeting basic needs, special services, and referrals	*Offer only specific services or treatments*
Respond flexibly to family and community needs	*Program and funding source dictate services*
Focus on families	*Focus on individuals*
Build on family strengths	*Emphasize family deficits*
Reach out to families	*Have strict eligibility requirements*
Often offer drop-in services	*Have rigid office hours*
Respond quickly to needs	*Often have waiting lists*
Offer services in family's home or in home-like centers	*Services are office-based*

At a Glance

The above table is a quick comparison between traditional service systems and family support. Which would you prefer for yourself and your family?

SUMMARIZING FAMILY SUPPORT

FAMILY SUPPORT IS:

⊗ A set of beliefs and an approach to strengthening and empowering families and communities so that they foster the optimal development of children, youth and adult family members.

⊗ A shift in how agencies and organizations do their work and interact with families and communities. Family support beliefs guide and shape health, education, and human service systems and organizations to be more preventive, community-based, culturally competent, flexible, family-focused, strengths-based, and comprehensive.

⊗ Family support is a type of grassroots, community-based program that provides resources for families. These programs have proliferated in neighborhoods across the country since the early 1970s. They continue to refine their practices and inform the field about quality in family support services.

Throughout the centuries, families relied on each other, friends and neighbors for support. They turned to these people for advice, emotional support, problem-solving, and financial assistance. Role models came from the community, not the mass media. As families changed, their traditional support systems faded. These changes left families and family members isolated, under increasing stress and less able to provide support to each other.

As traditional family support breaks down, we must intervene. Traditional social services must be reinvented. The premises and principles of family support must be incorporated into all programs — and these programs must be made available to all families. The time is now and the charge is ours — we must support our families.

ATTACHMENT 1

QUICK FACTS ON THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

ECONOMIC CHANGES PLACING FAMILIES UNDER INCREASING STRESS.

Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy, 1995

- Real wages, adjusted for inflation, have been declining for American workers since 1973.
- Average weekly earnings have fallen 19.2 percent - from $315.38 to $254.87.

Chicago Tribune, 1995

- It takes two wage earners to bring home what one earned 30 years ago.
- In 82 percent of the families earning $25,000 to $50,000, both partners work.
- In 69 percent of the families earning $50,000 or more, both husband and wife work.

Kagan and Weissbourd, 1994

- 42 percent of U.S. workers feel "used up" at the end of the workday.
- 40 percent feel so tired in the morning it is hard to get up and face another day at work.
- 17 percent of parents with children under age 13 experience "a lot" or "quite a lot" of conflicts balancing work, family and personal life. Another 43 percent experience some conflict.

Nebraska Kids Count, 1996

- Nebraska leads the nation in the percentage of families where both parents (or the sole parent) are in the labor force.
- 71 percent of all Nebraska children under 6 live in families where both parents or the single parent work.

PRESSURES ON SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES.

Children's Defense Fund, 1994

- 1991 birthrates among teenagers was 62.1 births per 1,000 - the highest in a quarter century.

Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1994

- Children in single-parent households lack access to as many economic, housing or human resources as children in two-parent families.

Zill and Nord, 1994

- In 1994, 53 percent of children in mother-only families lived below the official poverty line.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993

- Poverty rates for children in single-parent, female-headed households are 57 percent of African American children, 57 percent of Latino children, and 39 percent of white children.

Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, 1994

- People who grow up in single-parent households are more likely to become heads of single parent families.
- As adults, individuals from single parent households are likely to experience a lower socioeconomic status than those who grew up in two-parent households.

Nebraska Kids Count, 1996

- Teen births are often out-of-wedlock births.
- Out-of-wedlock births are related to poverty rates among single female-headed families.
- Poverty is not just an economic state; it also predicts many additional negative health, education and social outcomes.
- In Nebraska during 1995, out-of-wedlock births by teenagers were
  100 percent by girls aged 13-14;
  93.5 percent by girls aged 15;
  93.5 percent by girls aged 16; and
  86.4 percent by girls aged 17.

MANY NEIGHBORHOODS ARE NOT PROVIDING A SAFE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR FAMILIES.

Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1994

- Nearly 4 million children are growing up in "severely distressed neighborhoods." These places measure high in four or more of the following risk factors - poverty, female-headed families, high school dropout rates, unemployment, and reliance on welfare.

Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, 1994

- Young families are less likely to live near their extended families.
- Greater numbers of working parents and varied work schedules make it difficult for parents to connect with each other and to build friendships.
- In one survey, 47 percent of mothers reported their children had heard gunshots in their neighborhood; one in 10 of these young children had witnessed a knifing or shooting before the age of six.

Nebraska Departments of Health and Education Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1995

- Among 2,037 Nebraska youth in grades 9 to 12 surveyed, 89 percent reported using alcohol. About 70 percent had smoked in their lifetimes.

AMERICAN CHILDREN ARE AT RISK.

Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, 1994

- About 25 percent of families with children under three years of age fall below the poverty line. The rates are higher for African-American families, Latino families, and single-parent families with young children.

Zambrana, 1995

- In 1980, 20 percent of all children in the U.S. lived in poverty.
- In 1980, 38.4 percent of Latino children lived in poverty.

Ash, 1994

- In 1980, 33 percent of African-American children lived in poverty.

Children's Defense Fund, 1994

- In 1993, the number of children reported abused or neglected was almost 3 million - triple the 1981 rate.
- One in four babies are born to mothers who did not receive prenatal care in the first trimester.

U.S. Census Bureau

- In Nebraska, 58,474 children under 18 live in poverty.
- Only about 38 percent of poor children receive food stamps each month.

PUBLIC EXPENDITURES IN AMERICA ARE NOT PREVENTION ORIENTED.

Carnegie Task Force of Meeting the Needs of Young Children, 1994

- From 1985 through 1990, estimated public expenditures related to teenage childbearing totaled more than $120 billion. More than $48 billion could have been saved if these births had been postponed until the mother was 20 or older.
- For a low-birthweight infant, initial hospital care averages $20,000, and total lifetime medical costs average $400,000.

Committee for Economic Development, 1991

- About 82 percent of all Americans in prison are high school dropouts.
- The average annual cost to maintain each prisoner is $20,000.
- A year of high-quality pre-school costs about $4,800 and has been shown to decrease the teen arrest rate by 40 percent.

ATTACHMENT 2

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS AND FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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Only a few decades ago, American's lived in neighborhoods with their extended families and friends. Parents received information, advice, help, and support from religious groups, volunteer organizations, and schools. They counted on businesses, parks and recreational facilities, and transportation systems for support. During the 1970s, families became more mobile, mothers entered the workforce, and family structures changed dramatically. Young families were less likely to live near their extended families. Greater numbers of working parents and varied work schedules interrupted old rhythms of neighborhood life. It became difficult for parents to connect with each other and to build friendships.

As traditional sources of help disappeared, people came together in their communities to recreate what they needed. The early family support programs emerged in middle class communities in the 1970's. They arose from loose associations of neighbors providing advice and support to each other. The programs started in a variety of contexts - neighborhood clubs, community groups, groups of families with special needs, pre-school programs, Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and social service agencies.

Yet in many ways, today's family resource programs are old-fashioned. They assume the comforting, supportive roles churches, extended family members, and small town networks of friends once played. They provide a sense of belonging and safety. They let parents know help is available whenever it's needed. Interestingly, programs contain elements of three familiar antecedents - settlement houses, parent education efforts (especially those encouraged by Head Start), and self-help groups.

Settlement Houses. The settlement houses of the 1800s grew up in larger cities. They provided a vast array of support services for new immigrants who had few resources and faced overwhelming problems adjusting to a new culture. Most immigrants sought to maintain their traditional family life by assimilating those parts of their "old culture" that had special value and meaning. For these families, settlement houses became the temporary hub of their community

and social life. Here, they established new networks, made friends, learned new languages, and found food, clothing and jobs. Open to anyone who needed them, settlement houses dispensed services that were directly responsive to the people who used them. They were located where people lived and worked, and thought of the whole family as the unit of service.

Parent Education Efforts. Parent education has a long and varied history. It began in the earliest days of our country. Then, parents (mostly mothers) met in groups to learn the most efficient methods of "breaking the will of the child" to make children conform to proper religious teachings. While not exactly the history we would like to build today, it is the beginning of parents' historical attempts to find ways of improving in their children's education.

The PTA, begun by middle class mothers in the late 1800s, became a strong force in shaping widely accepted ideas about child-rearing and parent participation in the schools. The Child Study Association, formed early in the 1900s, brought a more professionalized focus to the task of understanding the influences of parents and incorporating new psychological principles into parenting. At the same time, Parents magazine began to widely disseminate the latest scientific knowledge to the public so that parenting could improve.

The advent of Head Start in the early 1960s and the subsequent explosion of new information about the early learning capacity of infants and toddlers began a whole new chapter in parent education. For the first time on a systematic national basis, low-income parents had regular access to a wealth of information about child development. Head Start programs were designed to encourage parents' participation in their children's early educational experiences. The effects of offering parent education opportunities to those not previously empowered had an enormous impact on quality early childhood education.

In family resource programs today, many elements of parent ownership and parent-directed programming come directly from the Head Start experience. Training parents as staff, opening up opportunities for staff and parents to use the program as a career path, and the strong linkages some family resource programs have to jobs programs are rooted in these Head Start models, developed as part of economic opportunity efforts.

Self-Help Groups. The third major historical link to today's family support programs is self-help groups. Beginning in the 1960s, people stopped relying solely on professionals for help. Individuals decided to take things into their own hands and self-help groups popped up all over the nation's landscape. The civil rights and social reform movements of the 1960s spurred much of this movement. Self-help was based on the realization that to make services more responsive and effective, service recipients should participate in both the design and delivery of services.

Family Resource Centers. The Beatrice Family Resource Center, established in 1987, was the first family resource center in Nebraska. The Northeast Lincoln Family Resource Center followed in 1990. There are over 35 family resource centers throughout the state and new centers are being planned in many communities.

Centers provide various family services including preventive health, education, emergency services, and childcare. It is not unusual to see schools, hospitals, community action agencies, mental health agencies, social services, mediation and Head Start programs involved in family resource centers. The movement crosses many ethnic groups and is well established in both rural and urban areas of the state.

The changes occurring in Nebraska and the nation make the centers' future bright. Thanks to community leaders from the public and private sector, organizations are overcoming old turf battles and genuinely collaborating (sharing resources). The family resource center movement is a model for locally designed, initiated and controlled partnerships.

Family Support Programs. These Nebraska public and non-profit organizations are at the center of the family support movement. Using existing partnerships, family resource centers work with all families to identify problems, develop comprehensive solutions and implement holistic action plans. By incorporating family support principles into their service delivery philosophy, family resource centers have become the best hope for strong families and communities.

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