



BC Association of Family Resource Programs

**Effectiveness and Long-Term Impacts
of the Work of
Family Resource Programs in Society**

**Supporting the Work of Family Resource Programs with
Scientific Evidence for
FRP-BC Members and FRP Practitioners**

2018 Consultation Report

Full Report

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Effectiveness and Long-Term Impacts of the work of Family Resource Programs in Society

EFFECTIVENESS

FAMILY RESOURCE PROGRAMS

Are relationship-based low-intensity support for families. Programs provide parents the time they need to engage in program activities. Engagement facilitates the parent-practitioner relationship.

RELATIONSHIP-BASED AND FAMILY-CENTRED

Relationships are essential in enhancing family **resilience**. Programs are holistic and encompass more than early childhood development.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE THE FAMILY INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS ALONE?

this comes down to the social nature of all human beings. Social skills are the core to the child's future success. From prenatal to age five, attachment shapes self-regulation and more.

AREN'T ATTACHMENT AND SELF-REGULATION SOMETHING PARENTS DO NATURALLY?

This depends on the childhood of the parents and their living environment. Different situations such as intergenerational trauma and stress may affect the bonding process and the parent-child relationship.

WHY ARE ATTACHMENT AND SELF-REGULATION IMPORTANT TO CHILD SUCCESS?

Healthy attachment between parent and child nurture healthy self-regulation in the child. The more self-regulated a child is, the more he or she will contribute to society as adult. Five-year-olds with low self-regulation skills are more likely to represent high economic costs to the welfare and judicial systems as adults.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

Parents with a history of high adverse childhood experiences may find their parenting skills unsettled.

STRESS

Isolation, depression and violence at home and more, can trigger stress in parents. Stress affects how parents treat their children and their relationship.

IN WHAT WAYS IS PARENT ENGAGEMENT CENTRAL TO FAMILY RESOURCE PROGRAMS?

Engagement and relationships are key to parents:

- Learning to deal with difficulty
- Appreciating and sharing the good/success times
- Gaining sense of belonging by engaging with their community,
- Strengthening child and family outcomes.

FUNCTION AS A NORMALIZING CONTEXT

Families with low and high situations of difficulty enjoy the same calming effect of a non-judgement environment offered at family resource programs.



PREVENTION OF ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Parenting is a journey, not a situation or skill. Parents and caregivers are motivated to participate in the family resource program because they have a family and not because they have a problem to solve.



TIME

Practitioners offer parents the time they need to develop trust to engage in conversation about family situations.



RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Relationships of trust between practitioner and parents are the groundwork that enables staff to respond effectively and provide instrumental help to parents.



FOLLOW-UP & RESOLUTION

Practitioners are able to check in with parents about previously discussed sensitive situations and arrive at a solution.



HOW DO PRACTITIONERS STRENGTHEN CHILD AND FAMILY OUTCOMES?

Practitioners consider three points: time, relationship-building, and follow-up and resolution. Intentional prevention practices offer parents the opportunity to learn how to view their own skills and to mobilize resources to deal with challenges. Families are provided opportunities to connect with their community.

ENGAGEMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS MAKE FAMILIES STRONGER

Engagement and relationships are capacity builders in many ways. They contribute to a sense of belonging. Positive parenting skills, healthy attachment and self-regulation in children. Practitioners at programs play a strategic role in prevention and family empowerment.

LONG-TERM IMPACTS IN SOCIETY

HEALTH

Obesity prevention
Depression and Anxiety
Substance use
Suicide

JUSTICE

Criminal behaviour
Violence against women
Violence against Indigenous people

RESILIENCE

Inclusion
Reduction of inequalities
Enhancement of social mobility

We acknowledge we are on the unceded traditional territory of the Kwantlen, Katzi and Matsqui Peoples



Introduction



Family resource programs (FRPs) are direct-service providers that provide families with children under 6 years old the opportunity to attend the programs on a drop-in basis. The family resource program approach requires the engagement of the parents in the activities. FRP-BC member programs and practitioners understand this empowerment model. Members and program facilitators want to articulate the unique features of both family-centred and child-centred programs. The purpose of this consultation report is to bridge the definition members and practitioners have of family resource programs with the effectiveness and long-term impact of their work.

The analysis of issues and information facilitated in this report are based on

the research reports *On the Ground, In the Field. Applied Promising Practices* (Charlesworth, Ellis, & Watson, 2013), *Family Resource Programs and Sustainable Development in BC* (Arias & Sinclair, 2018), *Monitoring Family Resource Programs in British Columbia* (Malange, Sinclair, & Khazaie, 2016) and *Three Principles to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families* (Center on the Developing Child, 2017). With this report, first, we will analyze the issues, second, we will define the effectiveness of family resource programs, and third, the effectiveness of FRPs will be contextualized in the form of long-term impacts providing scientific evidence. Additionally, this report provides a series of examples and scientific evidence practitioners and members can use for their own communications, grant applications, and printed material.

Analysis of Issues



We see the efforts of FRP-BC and member programs to find evidence that supports the effectiveness of the family-centred approach in community-based settings. These efforts are concentrated in convincing governments and individuals unfamiliar with the field that FRPs play an important role in answering many social challenges. Less material is directed to members programs and practitioners that clearly consolidate the definitions, purpose and long-term impacts of the work of FRPs. Here are a few salient issues we have noticed.

- Members and practitioners want to articulate the unique features of both family-centred and child-centred programs.
- Some practitioners are aware of the far-reaching impacts of their work in the health of families and child development in the short and long term. Some practitioners are learning to see FRPs through this lens.
- FRP-BC members seek funding to support their programs. A compelling grant application requires evidence to demonstrate to funders how their programs are a good investment. Members express the desire to secure clearly linked scientific evidence with family-centred programs.
- Research and reports on family-centered programs can be hard to find. They may have unclear titles or may not succinctly relay the content of the document to the reader.

Defining Effectiveness and Long-Term Impacts

There is no doubt all member programs and practitioners know how valuable their work is to society. As a former participating parent, volunteer or practitioner, you have first-hand experience of the effectiveness of family resource programs. However, when speaking to anyone unfamiliar with the field you may find it a challenge to explain the effectiveness or the long-term impacts in just a few words.

To connect the effectiveness of the work of family resource programs with its

long-term impacts on society, it helps to understand **what** the work is you do and **how** you do the work. Understanding your work well makes it easier to assure a parent or a funder how your program is effective and is worthy of joining or funding. We suggest you can explain the effectiveness of your program through the **what** and the **how**, and the long-term **impacts** of your program to society by establishing a connection between the **what** and the **how** with **scientific evidence**.

Why? Defining the effectiveness and long-term impacts of family resource programs is important because science proves the model works. Family programs emerged to support parents with challenges related to child rearing and changes in parents' lifestyle before the scientific evidence discovered the impact of the well-being of the family in relation to the socioemotional and cognitive development of children. The previous belief and practice to child success was centred on cognitive development through early education in

classroom settings with teachers, without parents present.

The evolution of scientific evidence now reports the health of the family as central to the socioemotional development of children, out of which the health of cognitive development grows. We bring research evidence to back up the effectiveness of family resource programs and the long-term impacts of family intervention during early childhood in the socioeconomic and emotional well-being of individuals and communities.

Effectiveness

is the ability to produce an intended outcome. The intended outcome, in this case, would be positive impacts of your program in families and society. For example, your program makes children and families happier and more resilient. We can think of these outcomes as the result of what you do and how you do it. Between the **what** and the **how**, the **how** is of interest to family resource programs because family-centred programs share their '**whats**' with other non-family-centred programs while our '**hows**' are more characteristic of family-centred approaches. To explain the effectiveness of your program to any stakeholder, it helps to have a rationale that says plainly what your programs are, how your programs work and what the impacts are for families and society.

The information below will walk you through what work you do and how you do it.

Engagement and Relationships:

Remind yourself that engagement

and relationships are the heart of the work of family resource programs. Supported with scientific evidence, family resource programs deliver low-intensity support to intentionally provide the time for parents to participate and volunteer in program activities and to create relationships among practitioners, other parents and the community. (Charlesworth et al., 2013, p. 22).

Low-intensity support is offered to parents over a length of time and matches the parent's openness.

Contrast Between Relationship-Based Family-Centred Practices and Child-Centred Practices:

FRPs are holistic. Programs come around the whole family with the intention to build relationships that empower parents. As a practitioner, you provide high-quality service reflected in your ability to be curious and anticipate the needs of the participants. Child development is framed within the context of the family. Family-centred

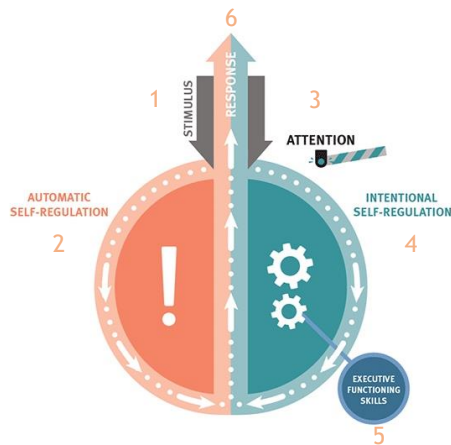
programs focus on the efficacy of the adult, the family and the child. Efficacy is believing you are able. The focus of a child-centred program is on the child, within the context of the program or school. Their activities and environment are based on the enhancement and promotion of healthy child development.

Why is it important to engage the whole family in contrast to focusing on child development and academic success alone?

Remember that family-centred programs prepare children for social life, and child-centred practices prepare children for school. FRPs ensure attachment and self-regulation have healthy development during the sensitive period, from age prenatal to 5 years old. Even so, both child-centred and family-centred programs are very important, and parents should have access to both. Some parents may or may not have the time to participate in an FRP or may prefer a child-centred approach. Each family has their own preferences and goals.

Why are attachment and self-regulation important to child success? Healthy attachment between parent and child nurtures healthy self-regulation in children. The more self-regulated a child is, the more likely he or she will contribute to society as an adult. The research available on attachment and self-regulation indicates that a five-year-old with low self-regulation skills are more likely to represent high economic costs to the welfare and judicial systems as an adult. As a practitioner, please note when you facilitate the interaction between parents and children in ways that promote parent-child attachment, the child's self-regulation increases.

Fig. 1 Mechanism of Self-regulation.



Source: Adapted from *Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2016)*.

1 Stimulus: The person receives stimulus (can be as simple as a noise, or as complex as an order from the parent not to touch crystal vase on a table).

2 the automatic self-regulation: is the initial unconscious goal-oriented / impulse-directed response the brain dictates in response to stimulus. In early ages, the child automatic self-regulation is to touch everything. In adulthood is determined by our experiences from childhood (parents teaching us vs. our impulses).

3 Attention: Is the gatekeeper that help us (or the child) focus on the specific things around relevant to the stimulus.

4 Intentional self-regulation: Is the planned and proactive response needed to achieve a goal.

5 & 6 Executive skills and response: Are the functions that make intentional self-regulation possible. These include, memory (of our goal), inhibition of motor action (moving hands, feet etc.), resist distractions and ability to adapt when plan A doesn't work (mom doesn't give the lollipop the child saw on the table, the child goes away to play instead).

Attachment style: Attachment is the emotional bond between caregiver and the infant. The style of attachment depends on how reliable the responses of the parent are. I.e. secure attachment: baby feels safe with the parent as the parent responds reliably to the needs of the baby.

Self-regulation: Is an internally motivated ability to control one's emotions, impulses, considering the consequences of our actions and to delay gratification. *Self-control* is externally motivated.

Example, A study exploring the link between attachment style and self-regulation found that attachment style predicts self-regulation (Orehek, Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis, Quick, & Weaverling, 2017). Higher levels of self-regulation are reflected in greater ability to assess situations, control impulses and to attain long-term goals (Kruglanski et al., 2000).

Aren't attachment and self-regulation something parents do naturally? This depends on the childhood of the parents and their living environment. Different situations such as **intergenerational trauma** and **toxic stress** related to isolation, limited parenting skills, depression, violence at home and more may affect the bonding process and the parent-child relationship. The relationship between parent and child during the child's first 5 years of life has life-long effects for the child.

Example, *Socioeconomic constraints can put parents in a situation that reduces compassionate treatment to their children often leading to adverse childhood experiences* (Shaefer, Lapidos, Wilson, & Danziger, 2018). *Research*

indicates that children who had an adverse childhood have higher probabilities to engage in criminal behaviour (Duke, Pettingell, McMorris, & Borowsky, 2010).

Consider this testimony of how FRPs helped a parent coping with doubts and stress.

"I was always worried that I wasn't being a good Mom. They gave me confidence that I am and ways to build better relationships with my children to rid of parent insecurities. A big thank-you to X and Y for teaching me different stages of different children, how to work with tempers and to get on my knees and see the world from my children's eyes." (Charlesworth et al., 2013, p. 25).

Intergenerational trauma: the abuse and oppression affecting one generation is transmitted to the next one. i.e. a child with abusive parents grows up and becomes a parent. He or she will treat their children based on the experiences they had as a child.

In what ways is parent engagement central to family resource programs? As a practitioner, you know that family resource programs revolve around relationships and conversations. Engagement and relationships are key to parents:

- When learning to deal with difficulty
- Showing appreciation and facilitating sharing of good and successful times
- Gaining a sense of belonging by engaging with their community
- Strengthening child and family outcomes

As a practitioner, how am I doing all this?

You normalize family life within the context of the FRP: As a practitioner, you help parents with young children

move through natural periods of sensitivity at home. Regardless how frequent a family goes through situations of difficulty, families with all level of difficulty equally enjoy the calming effect of a non-judgmental environment offered by the family resource programs (Charlesworth et al., 2013).

Example, Parent expresses the sense of well-being thanks to the normalizing environment of FRPs.

"Foremost, the staff make this facility great! I am a single mother of two children and place great value on the break I get when I bring my children to Family Place. This is a safe and healthy environment where I can let my children play or do a craft while I sit and enjoy a coffee and adult conversation. The staff here have been an important sounding board for me and have offered objective advice for personal issues in my life and have been very helpful in solving behavioural challenges with my youngest." (Charlesworth et al., 2013, p. 26).

You help to prevent adverse childhood experiences: Parenting is a journey, not a situation or a skill. FRPs are practice places. You motivate parents and caregivers to participate in the programs because they have a family and not because they have a problem to

solve. You intentionally build relationships with parents and help them explore and expand their parenting skills. You validate parents' efforts and make them feel successful as parents. A comprehensive study on family-centred programs found that the role of practitioners in making parents feel competent increases parents perceived self-efficacy. When parents feel good about themselves, they engage in consistent parental practices preventing any adverse reaction toward their children (Dunst, 2017).

Engagement and relationships make families stronger.

Engagement and relationships are capacity builders in many ways. These contribute to a sense of belonging, parenting skills, healthy attachment and self-regulation in children. As a practitioner you play a strategic role in the prevention of poor child and family outcomes and family empowerment. What parents learn at your family resource program develops into healthy outcomes for the whole family.

Example, a **responsive relationship** refers to the interaction between parent and child where the parent reads the baby's cues and responds appropriately to the baby's babble, cry etc. Responsive relationships in the first years of life promote healthy brain development in children and prevent the negative effect of hormones released during highly stressful situation. You are also mindful of the importance of consistency in building responsive and human-paced relationships. Providing consistency to parents and children is equally important.

The interaction of parents with other parents, children and practitioner promote the continuity of responsive relationships. Specialists recommend that "policy advocating for the well-being of children should make sure parents have the opportunity to build relationships with other parents" (Center on the Developing Child, 2017).

How do practitioners strengthen child and family outcomes?

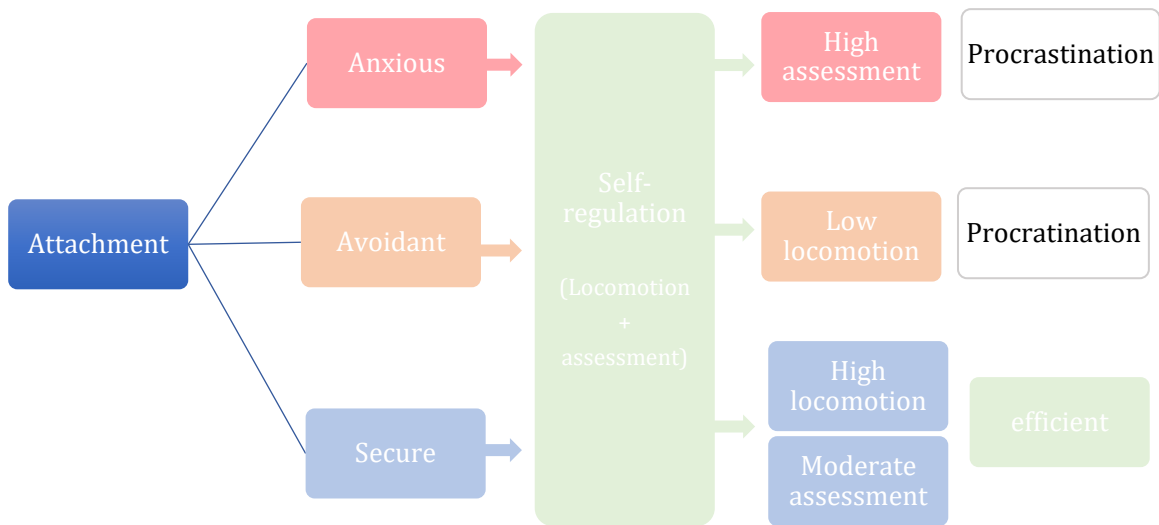
Your training and experience provide with **the intentional prevention practices** you use in your daily interactions with parents. These practices offer parents the opportunity to learn how to mobilize resources and deal with challenges. Families are provided with connections to their community. As a FRP practitioner, you consider three points to empower families: time, relationship-building and follow-up & resolution (Charlesworth et al., 2013).

Time: You allow parents the time they need to trust you to engage in conversation about family situations.

Relationship-building: Relationships of trust between you and parents are the groundwork that gives you the opportunity to respond effectively and provide instrumental help to parents.

Follow up and resolution: You have a great memory. You are able to check in with parents about previously discussed sensitive situations and companion parents as they navigate and arrive at a solution. You are aware that family problems are life paced and that situations may take from days to weeks to months to be resolved.

Fig. 2 influence of attachment style on self-regulation and success.
University students and assignment grade



Source: Based on Orehek, Vazeou-Nieuwenhuis, Quick, and Weaverling, (2017).

The style of attachment of an individual (anxious, avoidant or secure) can determine their ability to self-regulate when engaging in goal-oriented actions. The graph is an example of the influence of attachment on self-regulation. This graph shows the attachment style of university students on the left and on the right the outcome of self-regulation when presented with an assignment.

Anxious attachment -> High assessment:

- This assignment is too difficult.
- I don't have time to complete it.
- There's so much to do, I don't know where to start.

Outcome: Takes too long to start working on assignment - low grade on assignment.

Avoidant attachment -> Low locomotion:

- I will get this assignment done later.
- No need to get this done yet.
- Why would I bother to start early? I can get it done later.

Outcome: Waits until last minute to complete assignment - low grade on assignment.

Secure attachment -> High locomotion + moderate assessment:

- What do I need to get this done?
- Let's get to work!

Outcome: Starts working on assignment promptly - high grade on assignment.

Child outcome

These are the social, emotional and cognitive abilities developed during childhood.

Family outcome:

These are the capacities of the family to understand the needs of their children (development), access community resources, engagement with their community and have social network support in place.

Locomotion:

Any motor actions. For example, moving hands to grab a book, moving eyes when reading.

Assessment:

The considerations taken before initiating any motor action. For example, evaluating the risk of an action, the time needed to complete an action, how much strength needed to lift a glass.

Long-Term Impacts in Society

➤ Health

➤ Justice

➤ Resilience

Now that the **what** and the **how** are clear, let's talk about the scientific evidence available supporting the positive long-term impacts of family resource programs. We covered the **what** and the **how** because this is what influences the long-term impacts. For example, you can say research indicates that adverse childhood experiences are connected to criminal behaviour in teenagers and that research also indicates that FRPs prevent antisocial behaviour by reducing adverse childhood experiences. However, a curious parent or an inquisitive funder may want to know **what** you do and **how** you do it. It is of great value to you as a member or practitioner when you can identify the fine details of your daily work that are making all the difference. Additionally, you may feel drawn to enhance particular practices or to notice parents or children who may need more support.

We capitalize on four reports to bring together data on family resource programs, endorsing international legal order, policy recommendations by authorities in the field of development, and testimonies of parents. We have grouped the evidence into three areas: Health, Justice and Resilience.

Family Resource Programs and Sustainable Development in BC (Arias & Sinclair, 2018): This report is important because it addresses the notion of sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed by the United Nations in 2015. As a signing party, Canada has the responsibility to adopt and implement the SDGs.

Monitoring Family Resource Programs in British Columbia (Malange, Sinclair, & Khazaie, 2016): This monitoring report provides the data of the services of family resource programs used in the sustainable development report mentioned above.

On the Ground, In the Field. Applied Promising Practices (Charlesworth et al., 2013): The emotional and human components are crucial. This report covers the impact family resource programs practices have on families and includes parents' quotes and testimonies.

Three Principles to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families (Center on the Developing Child, 2017): The Harvard Center on the Developing Child is an authority in child development policy. This report is important because it provides policy recommendations to governments. The three principles are responsive relationships, support core life skills and reduce sources of stress. The three principles and recommendations in the document are inherent to family resource programs.

Health

Obesity Prevention



SDG 2: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 on *Zero Hunger*. FRPs in BC contribute to the implementation of this goal with the provision of community kitchens and nutrition education with short and long-term impacts. (Arias & Sinclair, 2018).

Evidence on community kitchens: Research shows that community kitchens provide more than quality meals. They increase awareness about food insecurity and provide opportunities for socialization that indirectly lead to long-term food security (Iacovou, Pattieson, Truby, & Palermo, 2013). Community kitchens and dinner activities motivate parents to adopt a healthy lifestyle and healthy diets (Anderson, Newby, Kehm, Barland, & Hearst, 2015).

Data: 33% of family resource program members of FRP-BC offer community kitchens and dinner activities. 47% of program members provide nutrition education (Malange, Sinclair, & Khazaie, 2016).

FRP staff offer instrumental and intentional relationship-building: Staff facilitates access to food (i.e. going to the food bank) when families go through life challenges such as a death in the family (Charlesworth et al., 2013, p. 37).

Policy for reducing the source of stress: Persistent stress causes the release of toxic stress hormones. These hormones can affect brain development

and relationship building in children and parent. Experts recommend policies designed to reduce barriers to access basic support such as nutritious food (Center on the Developing Child, 2017).

Depression and Anxiety



SDG 3: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 on *Improving family health and well-being*. Family resource programs have a holistic support system in place to prevent depression in the life of children by supporting parent-child attachment, prenatal education, and adverse childhood experiences. (Arias & Sinclair, 2018).

Evidence on adverse childhood experiences: Depression or any stressful circumstance affects healthy attachment in the first years of life.

- Healthy attachment is correlated with good mental health in adulthood (Bowlby, 1960).
- Family programs offer support to parents and facilitate healthy bonding between child and parent. Alcoholism is a trait that is explained by 60% of genetic expression. Alcohol stimulates anxiety calming mechanisms in the brain motivating individuals to drink (McGue, 1999).
- Even if parents struggle with alcoholism, healthy environmental conditions can trade this genetic predisposition in the children for an alcoholism-free life. Parental support in prenatal and early childhood can trade genetic predisposition to alcoholism and the child can become healthy adults (Blaze, Asok, & Roth, 2015).

- FRPs offer prenatal prepartum and post-partum counselling resources. Research also indicates that domestic violence, an adverse childhood experience, predisposes children to depression (Day, 1992). Staff at family resource programs build relationships with parents offering an opportunity for parents to trust and talk about violence at home with practitioners.
- The relationships practitioners offer to parents is a potent motivator for the reduction of violence at home (Arias & Sinclair, 2018, p. 20).

Practices that promote attachment at FRPs: There is evidence indicating that FRPs promote specific practices to improve attachment. For example, an analysis of 26 checklists of family-centred programs concludes that practices promoted by practitioners at family-centred programs are the most effective for the promotion of improved child development and child-parent relationship. These practices include helping the parents gain awareness of their child’s behavioural, emotional and social cues (Dunst, 2017). Note, these are the **what** and the **how** previously discussed. These capacity-building and competence-enhancing practices are core to family-centred programs.

Data: 28% of the programs offer postpartum depression support. 16% of member programs provide prenatal guidance to parents. 9% of the programs offer settlement support to parents helping them deal with their isolation problems, 6 of every 10 programs have helped families resolve conflicts and

roughly 2 in 10 (16%) staff members have assisted parents with drugs and alcohol challenges. (Malange et al., 2016).

Policy for supporting responsive relationships: Policies aiming to prevent depression could consider supporting FRPs so that practitioners can do their job most effectively. The Harvard Center on the developing child states that governments and programs “need to provide workers in-service programs with enough time to develop relationships with the people they are expected to help, as reflected by caseload/class sizes, as well as allow for interactions of sufficient duration, frequency, and consistency, and reduce documentation requirements that can cause staff to spend too much time with forms and too little with their clients” (Center on the Developing Child, 2017, p. 4).

Substance use



SDG 3: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 on *Improving family health and well-being* by preventing the harmful use of substances. Support to parents in the acquisition and enhancement of coping strategies and well-being prevent adverse childhood experiences contributing to the implementation of Goal 3 (Arias & Sinclair, 2018, p. 17).

Evidence on substance abuse: Practitioners understand moving to a new country is a stressful experience. Immigration is a stressful situation that can have negative effects on children in

BC, high-school students who came to Canada as immigrants are 47% more likely to consume marijuana compared to 12% of their Canadian-born peers. Those who immigrated when they were young report smoking more often than Canadian-born students (Smith et al., 2016). Research indicates that family resource programs help new immigrant families overcome isolation and depression (Pereira, Khazaie, & Gannon, 2015).

Research also found that unhealthy habits and difficult situations affecting parents prior to pregnancy can activate genes involved in preferences (i.e. preference for alcohol) and problem resolution and be passed onto their children due to epigenetics (Riddihough & Zahn, 2010).

Data:

- 9% of family resource programs provide settlement support
- 12% provide workshops for newcomers (Malange et al., 2016)

Testimony of a parent: Parents attending FRPs learn to cope.

“At the time we first began visiting Family Place I really felt lost at times. I recall feeling overwhelmed – “what do I do?”- was how I felt. Today I usually feel very confident that as things change we can deal with new situations. I look forward to the challenges and rewards that raising children can offer instead of being afraid of the unknown. (Staff person) has been particularly helpful in this regard thank-you so much.” (Charlesworth et al., 2013, p. 25).

Policy for strengthening children and adult core life skills: We are not born with core life skills such as adapting to new situations or resisting impulses. For this reason, the Center on the Developing Child encourages governments to design policies focusing in two-generations programs to provide incremental steps and the opportunities for parents to learn to self-regulate (Center on the Developing Child, 2017, p. 5)

Suicide



SDG 3: the SDG 3 on *health and well-being* aim is to address situations of preventable death. Scientific evidence confirms that FRPs contribute to Goal 3 with the prevention of adverse childhood experiences which are correlated to mental well-being in adulthood (Arias & Sinclair, 2018, p. 17).

The Trauma Informed Practitioner

Practices involve recognizing, understanding and responding to the effects of trauma. An FRP practitioner does not ask, “What’s wrong with you?” Instead, we ask, “What’s happened to you?”

Evidence on suicide: Adverse childhood experiences have life-long lasting effects. Researchers found that adverse childhood experiences increase the probabilities of attempt suicide in adults 2 to 5 times (this doesn’t include any other situational or genetic predisposition) (Dube et al., 2001). Additional studies indicate that

comprehensive suicide prevention should start with childhood and family well-being to prevent adversity in childhood (Ports et al., 2017).

Data: Intergenerational trauma and any persistent stressful situation could result in an adverse environment on the developing child. You can refer to all the data referring to FRPs support to parents listed above or below this point. FRPs take active action to reduce the probabilities of adversity. For example, becoming a parent can be stressful, 95% of FRPs provide activities to support parents with parenting skills (Malange et al., 2016).

Testimony of a parent: FRPs staff's kindness and predisposition provide emotional support to Parents.

"I am going through post-partum with my second child and this place is wonderful. I didn't leave my house before, and now I look forward to coming here. The staff is very accommodating. They really help you by creating a fun atmosphere. They let you help too if you want, which I find rewarding in itself. It feels good to contribute, it lets me feel a sense of accomplishment that makes me feel stronger and better for myself and my kids. They will entertain and hold my baby while I spend some positive quality time with my toddler one on one. Besides the friendly staff, meeting other families sure makes me feel connected." (Charlesworth et al., 2013, p. 25).

Policy for supportive responsive relationships: providing support to parents is a long-term positive socioeconomic benefit. The work of

practitioners and FRPs is emulated by the **#longgame**, as FRPs consider the future implications of current choices, think ahead and are deliberate and patient. The Center on the Developing Child recommends "the provision of sufficient flexibility in benefits to avoid the disruption of critical relationships with caregivers that happens when children cycle in and out of programs due to loss of a child care subsidy, housing instability, or involvement in the child welfare system. Establish policies that strengthen family relationships whenever possible; for example, promote frequent contact between children in out-of-home care and their parents and reduce the change of placement in children in foster care. Offer services through trusted organizations and individuals in the community that have already built strong relationships with community members" (Center on the Developing Child, 2017, p. 4).

#longgame

Refers to a long-term strategy or endeavour. FRPs are long-game players in the life of families. From prenatal to housing issues, FRPs understand being a parent occurs in a complex system by adapting to the system. For example, sometimes parents are unable to attend a registered program. FRPs removed the formality of attendance by adopting the drop-in model which welcomes parents with their children whenever they can drop by.

Justice

Criminal Behaviour



SDG 10 & 11 Sustainable Development Goal: Goal 10 on *Reduced inequalities* and Goal 11 on *Sustainable communities* (crime



reduction): FRPs contribute to the long-term targets of these goals with the activities that promote self-regulation and prevention of adverse childhood experiences in families of all socioeconomic backgrounds (Arias & Sinclair, 2018, p. 22).

Evidence of crime: self-regulation in children between age 3 to 5 is a strong predictor of criminal behaviour (Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2013; Moffitt et al., 2011). As a practitioner, you want to emphasize the fact that providing support to parents to orient them in the role of parenting may outweigh the role of not-so-positive genetic traits.

- A positive nurturing early childhood is a stronger determinant of adult outcome than genetic predispositions (Maggi, Irwin, Siddiqi, & Hertzman, 2010). Adverse childhood experiences are common among convicts (Fergusson et al., 2013).
- Compared to individuals without criminal records, offenders reported 4 to 10 more times higher rates of abuse during their childhood and boys who were

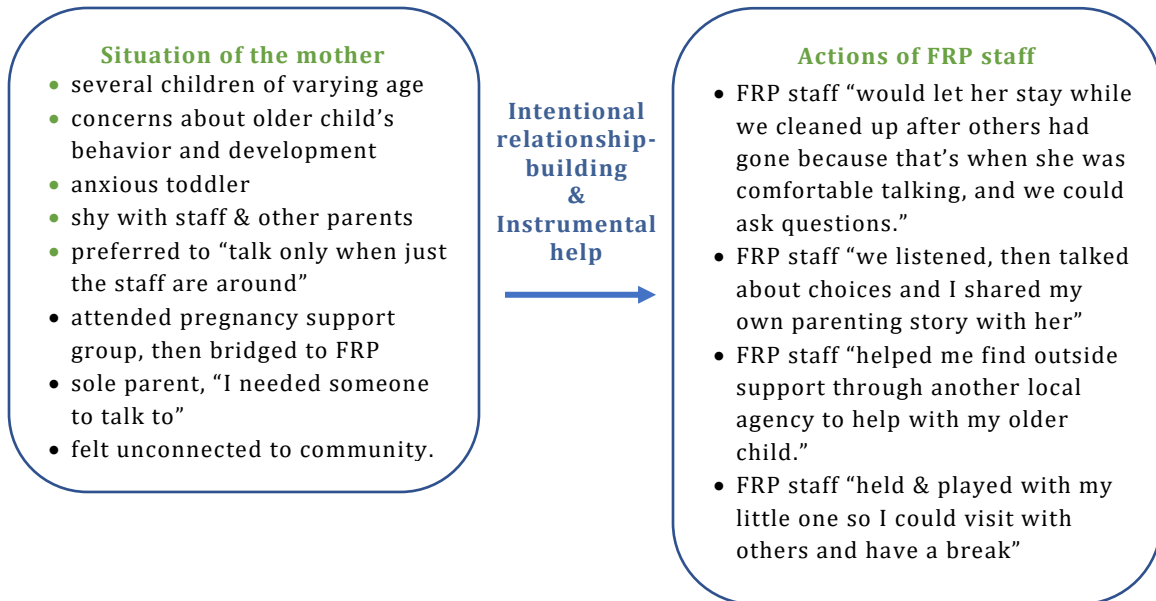
sexually abused by a family member are 45 times more likely to become sex offenders (Reavis, 2013).

- In Canada, 51% of the crime committed by youth were violent acts (Allen & Superle, 2016).

Data: As a practitioner or member, you recognize many activities offered by FRPs target self-regulation in children. 90% of the programs include self-regulation activities. Staff in 70% of the agencies have helped parents with child's discipline issues (Malange et al., 2016).

Observation by an FRP staff: This observation describes the instrumental help and intentional relationship-building actions taken by staff to address self-regulation issues of a parent's children. This help includes referral for the parent's oldest child who was not participating in the FRP.

The situation of a mother as described by staff



Source: Adapted from *On the Ground, In the Field- Applied Promising Practices* (2013, p. 33)

Policy for supportive responsive relationships: As a practitioner or member, you are conscious of the importance of consistency in building responsive relationships. Providing consistency to parents and children is equally important. The Center on the Developing Child suggests that policy should be designed to ensure the compensation of practitioners is adequate to prevent disruption of relationships when practitioners leave. Use trusted organizations that have already built strong relationships in the community. Coach practitioners and caregivers in **serve-and-return interaction**. Hire practitioners who are

Serve-and-return interaction

These are the interactions between the baby and the parent that help building connexions in the baby's developing brain. The parent responds to the baby's cues such as babbling ('Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016).

motivated to build relationships (provide a setting where candidates can be observed interacting with other people) (Center on the Developing Child, 2017, p. 4).

Violence against women



SDG 5: Sustainable Development Goal 5 *Gender Equality* calls for gender inclusion and the prevention

of gender-based violence. FRPs are places where male and female caregivers of different cultural backgrounds meet. This informal and inclusive setting lends itself to the promotion of love and gender equality across the spectrum (Arias & Sinclair, 2018, p. 19).

Evidence on gender equality:

- The informal setting of FRPs empowers women with active participation, program planning,

trust etc. (Silver, Berman, & Wilson, 2005).

- The active engagement of family-centred members with the community has led to offering programs in other languages. These programs become a safe place for immigrant women with limited English language knowledge who may be subject to abuse of violence at home (Kulwicki, Aswad, Carmona, & Ballout, 2010).

Data: The openness to male and female participants may help to break gender biases and discrimination that could exist in people. 33% or 1 of 3 parents attending the programs are men. Women trust FRP staff. Females represent almost 100% of the reported gender-based violence cases to FRPs staff (Malange et al., 2016).

Testimony of a parent: The quote below is a good example of the effectiveness of FRPs in building trust in women and the prevention or reduction of violence against women.

“The staff have very much touched my life, especially (staff person). She listened when I needed it. She supported me in any way possible and let me know I was not alone. Thanks!” (Charlesworth et al., 2013, p. 26).

Violence Against Indigenous People



**SDG 5,
10 &
11:
Gender**

Equality, Reduced Inequalities and

Sustainable Communities FRPs contribute to these goals by reaching to the Indigenous communities with programs designed to serve their needs. FRP staff are motivated to empower Indigenous people and to bring awareness about their reality among non-Indigenous participants. Current efforts advocating for the recognition and responsibility for the effects of colonialism include a Statement of Reconciliation drafted by FRP-BC (Arias & Sinclair, 2018, p. 19-20).

Evidence on violence against Indigenous people: Practitioners and members want to be an example of inclusion to non-Indigenous and Indigenous children to stop the perpetuation of abuse.

- In Canada, violence against Indigenous women is twice as high as non-Indigenous women. Indigenous women are 10% less likely to report abuse from their spouses compared to 3% of non-Indigenous women (Perreault, 2015).
- Evidence points out that racism and intergenerational trauma are factors behind this rate (Byrne & Abbott, 2011).

Data: FRPs are a safe place for Indigenous families as well. Indigenous participants represent 8.7 % of the total member participants. This number is important because Indigenous people in BC represent 5.4% of the population (Malange et al., 2016).

Testimony of a parent: this quote is an example of FRP staff building confidence

in parents by reassuring the sense of self-efficacy in their skills.

“I am inspired by the encouraging and enthusiastic staff. They are ‘Mother Teresa’s in training! Always have encouraging words, helpful, resourceful, and willing to help and go the extra mile. I am so thankful I’ve moved to such a caring community.” (Charlesworth et al., 2013, p. 26).

Policy for core life skills to stop violence against Indigenous people:

To tackle racism and discrimination against Indigenous people we support the current Indigenous generations to empower themselves with agency and self-efficacy. Furthermore, as a practitioner, it helps to offer the opportunities to both Indigenous and

non-indigenous children, seeing the value in themselves as they develop a strong agency and learn about inclusion. The Center on the Developing Child advocates for policies that focus in practice of incremental steps to achieve a goal. For example, if the goal is to “motivate aboriginal women to report acts of violence” or “an inclusiveness in children”, the steps could target developing their confidence (ask for their opinion), sense of self-efficacy (motivate decision making) (Center on the Developing Child, 2017, p. 4). As an FRP practitioner you know that FRPs already execute these practices. However, this policy proposal is important if we want to prove that your work aligns with scientific evidence and with the FRP-BC *Statement of Reconciliation*.

Resilience

Resilient communities

Families are the heart of communities and supporting families in their own resiliency in turn creates resilient communities. In addition to the well-being benefits within justice by crime prevention and crime reduction, FRPs make communities sustainable by facilitating inclusive access to services for all families.

Inclusion



SDG 5, 11, 16 & 17 Goals 5 on *Gender equality*, 11 on *Sustainable communities*, 16 on *Peace, justice, and strong institutions*, and 17 on *Partnership for the Goals*.: Arias and Sinclair (2018, P. 20-28) found that FRPs' inclusive practices contribute to reaching the targets of these goals. Some of FRPs practices include welcoming families of various minorities, i.e. sexual orientation or cultural background, assisting parents with parenting skills, access to early education programs for all children, the participation of parents in program design, and motivating partnership among stakeholders.

Evidence on inclusion:

- Research shows that parents develop feelings of community belonging when they are engaged in participatory decision making at FRPs (Charlesworth et al., 2013).

- The early childhood education programs offered by FRPs are important because they improve the situation of children at higher risk. Consider this: early education is linked to academic and professional success. It improves cognitive development and increases the opportunities for a successful academic future (Maggi et al., 2010).
- In your practice, you will see the connection between your work, the FRP-BC Provincial Standards of Practice and how they promote inclusion. As a FRP-BC member, you can demonstrate you meet the criteria and receive the certification of quality assurance. When your program is certified it says you are effectively facilitating partnerships among families, community service providers and funders, as indicated in section 3 of the Standards (FRP-BC, 2017).
- Partnership is essential in making communities stronger. Families who have a strong social network support are unlikely to be exposed to situations of economic hardship (Henly, Danziger, & Offer, 2005). As an FRP-BC member, your certification attests to your work as a strong promoter of happiness and well-being in your community.
- Your work in partnership-building, inclusive decision making, and program planning helps the association fulfill the SDG 16 on *Peace and Strong Institutions*. FRPs are designed with the participation of stakeholders, making the programs as effective and meaningful as possible.

Data on inclusion:

- on early literacy, 50% of the programs include early literacy activities.
- 90% of the FRPs promote the development of social networks among parents.
- 100% of the FRPs have helped parents with challenges related to parenting skills (Malange et al., 2016).

Parent's quote: A parent may be the most loving and caring person, yet, the lack of parenting skills can reduce the socioeconomic future of their children with respect to those raised with more parental guidance. This is a quote from a mom who, after joining an FRP and building stronger parenting skills, started to have a better relationship with her child.

"I was always worried that I wasn't being a good Mom. They gave me confidence that I am and ways to build better relationships with my children to rid of parent insecurities. I big thank-you to X and Y for teaching me different stages of different children, how to work with tempers – and to get on my knees and see the world from my children's eyes." (Charlesworth et al., 2013, p. 25).

Policy for the reduction of sources of stress: Sense of belonging is critical to well-being. Families who do not feel they belong to their community may step into unhealthy emotional states affecting their interactions with their children. In consideration of recent studies, the Center on the Developing

Child indicates that policies designed to foster the well-being of families and children need to be of easy access to families. For examples, parents should be able to attend FRPs with minimal requirements to join the programs and to avoid punitive rules. These policies should provide consisting funding for the provision of the FRPs. They also suggest that programs should empower parents with skills for a healthy environment at home (Center on the Developing Child, 2017, p. 7). As a member or practitioner, you know FRPs operate by these standards. This evidence may be effective in persuading parties on the importance of consistent funding.

Are there vulnerable families or resilient families?

We find what we look for. Every family face challenges. Resilience happens when families bounce back or recover from difficulty. The more challenges overcome, the more resiliency is shown.

Reduction of Inequalities and Enhancement of Socioeconomic Mobility



SDGs 1, 10 & 11: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1, 10 & 11 on *No Poverty, Reduced Inequalities, Sustainable Cities and Communities*. FRPs help in the implementation of Goals 1, 10 and 11 with actions that improve Society. Reduction of family socioeconomic hardship and the provision of equal opportunities to children (i.e. nutrition and parenting

skills) at early ages contribute to the reduction of inequalities and economic success of the growing child. FRPs' efforts encompass assistance to parents with economic difficulties in more than one way and ensure children benefit from the same parental skills providing orientation to parents in the upbringing of their children (Arias & Sinclair, 2018).

Evidence on inequalities and socioeconomic success: the socioeconomic well-being of an individual is correlated to their childhood.

- Socioeconomic difficulty may cause adversity in childhood. Research indicates that the stress related to economic hardship is linked to hostile responses of parents toward their children (Shaefer, Lapidus, Wilson, & Danziger, 2018).
- Appropriate self-regulation in children under 6 years of age is a predictor of professional success (Fergusson et al., 2013; Moffitt et al., 2011).
- Families encounter adversity as an element of life. Children grow up to be resilient adults when their families possess the skills to teach them how to cope with adversity (Sege & Harper Browne, 2017).

Data on socioeconomic success: The statistics contained here correspond to the services FRPs deliver. These efforts reduce inequality and encourage socioeconomic success in children.

- 14% of FRPs provide information related to employment.
- 50% of the programs provide concrete support to families who require help meeting their basic needs.
- 75% of FRPs include activities for the enhancement of family resilience.
- 90% of the FRPs focus on self-regulation in children. The activities of 95% of the programs help parents build stronger parenting skills.
- 50% of the FRPs offer early literacy activities (Malange et al., 2016).

Policy for core life skills: Childhood is the main determinant of socioeconomic differences among individuals. In order to offer the same opportunities for socioeconomic success to everyone, including children of vulnerable families, parents need appropriate parental skills to provide their children with core life skills, so they can thrive in life. The Center on the Developing Child encourages policies for two generations programs so that children and parents have the opportunity to develop life skills. The Center highlights the importance of brain development and self-regulation. Children can develop these skills with consistent parenting even when adversity at home persists. In practice, programs should provide regular opportunities for parents and children to learn these skills (Center on the Developing Child, 2017, p. 5). This important suggested practice aligns with the way FRP staff facilitate the programs.

Conclusion

We designed this consultation to help practitioners and members to distinguish family-centred practices from other practices and to illustrate what, how and why family resource programs do their work. We explained the efforts of community-based intervention work by breaking down the practices of FRPs and describing how they are achieved. Scientific findings are provided to illustrate their efficacy. We discussed the long-term impacts of FRPs in society to reveal their effectiveness in attaining the sustainable societies we need. Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda is also covered.

All in all, we hope this report shines a light for practitioners and members in the family resource support work you do, how you do it and why it matters.

An annual or biannual publication of a consulting report with new scientific finding for the use of practitioners and members is recommended.

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