



Kent County *Family & Children's* Coordinating Council



2001 Annual Report

The Mission of the Council is to provide leadership to enhance the well being of children, youth, and families in Kent County so that they may achieve their greatest potential.

Richard Gritter, Chair

Wedgwood Christian Family & Youth Services

Diana Sieger, Vice Chair

Grand Rapids Community Foundation

Susan Broman

Steelcase Foundation

Reverend Ellen A. Brubaker

United Methodist Church

Ruth Buntin

Advocate/Consumer

Judge Nanaruth H. Carpenter

17th Circuit Court: Family Division

Candace Cowling

Child and Family Resource Council

Tom Czerwinski

Area Agency on Aging

Beverly A. Drake

Area Community Services & Employment Training

William A. Forsyth

Kent County Prosecutor's Office

Lynn Heemstra

Office of Children, Youth, and Families

Karl Hascall

Hascall Steel Corp.

Debra Holmes-Garrison

Heart of West Michigan United Way

Bonnie Huntley, Ph.D.

Community Mental Health

Linda McDonald

Advocate/Consumer

Miles Murphy

Advocate/Consumer

Patti Nussbaum

Project Rehab

Maria O'Hare

Advocate/Consumer

Cathy Raevsky

Kent County Health Department

Milton Rohwer

Frey Foundation

Mike Weiler

Kent Intermediate School District

Mary Alice Williams

Arbor Circle

Andrew Zylstra

Family Independence Agency

About the Council...

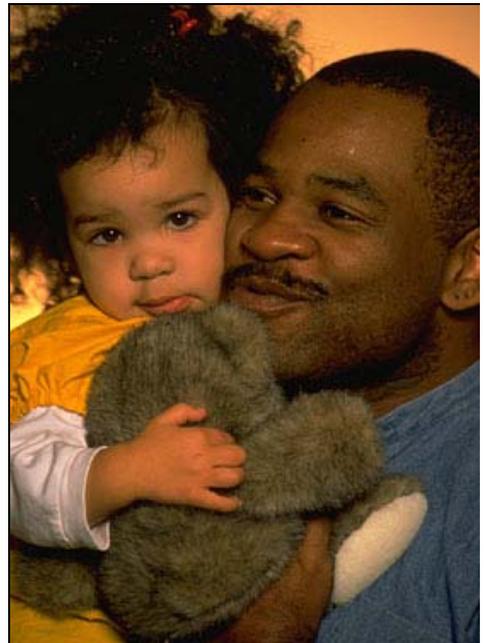
The Kent County Family & Children's Coordinating Council is an appointed body of the Kent County Board of Commissioners that serves as a forum for service providers to work together to coordinate and improve services for children, youth, and families in Kent County. The Council is made up of the directors of the County and State departments that provide services to families in Kent County and representatives from education, business, private agencies, private funding organizations, consumers, and advocates. The Council's duties include:

- **Service Coordination...** Develop, implement, and maintain a countywide plan (the Plan) for services to children, youth and families. Support comprehensive coordination and collaboration among service providers by acting as an information clearing house, promoting the development of appropriate services consistent with the Plan, and promoting system re-structuring to enhance effectiveness and reduce cost.
- **Systems Improvement...** Develop recommendations to allocate and expand resources and implement policies to improve the quality of life of children, youth and families in Kent County. Increase cultural sensitivity and competence in the service delivery system and ensure that the system is consumer-driven with service plans built upon family strengths.
- **Accountability & Oversight...** Oversee the administration, distribution and use of the Strong Families/Safe Children funds allocated for Kent County. Act in the capacity of the Multi-Purpose Collaborative Body for funding and activities when the action does not involve a County department or operation. Develop a plan for evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council's activities.

A Year of Change...

The year 2001 was a year of change for the Kent County Family & Children's Coordinating Council. The Council's efforts to streamline its required duties and increase its effectiveness resulted in a major restructuring of its organization and membership at the close of 2000. Throughout 2001, the Council worked to redesign its policies and processes to enhance its ability to target and implement specific systems improvements. Highlights from the Council's restructuring include:

- New mission that highlights the Council's commitment to providing leadership to impact the lives of families in Kent County
- New committees designed to enhance the Council's ability to focus its efforts on specific systems improvements
- New streamlined membership that helps the Council reach decisions faster while encouraging greater community participation through committees
- New Bylaws, guidelines, and procedures to reflect the Council's new structure and ensure a strong organizational foundation for future efforts
- New designation by the Board of Commissioners that allows the Council to act in the capacity of the Multi-Purpose Collaborative Body for certain actions, which results in a more efficient approval process
- Newly designed web site (www.accesskent.com/kcfccc) allows members and the general community to find out about meeting dates, read meeting agendas and minutes, and access the Council's bylaws, policies, and procedures



A New Structure for Action...

The key result of the Council's restructuring was the establishment of a new committee structure designed to allow the Council to take a more targeted approach to service coordination. The Council's standing committees reflect critical intervention points for children, youth, and families. Open to both Council members and the general community, the committees are working to develop and implement action plans based on the "Our Children Our Future" Standards for Children.



■ **Early Childhood Committee (ages 0 to 5)**

The Early Childhood Committee is focusing its efforts on increasing community awareness about the importance of the first five years of life, and is working to ensure that every family in Kent County has access to quality family support services, parenting education, health care, and early childhood education and care. The committee's focus parallels the emphasis placed on family support services by the Prevention Subcommittee Report, a series of recommendations adopted by the Kent County Board of Commissioners in 2001 that outlines the County's vision for preventing costly and destructive social and health problems.



■ **Elementary School Years Committee (ages 5 to 10)**

When school lets out for the summer, many low-income children lose access to the nutritious school breakfasts, lunches, and after-school snacks they receive during the school year. Some agencies, like the Grand Rapids Public Schools, are already working to address this issue. Despite the success of their efforts, however, only a small fraction of Kent County's eligible children currently participate in the program. The Elementary School Years Committee is working with community partners to increase participation in existing sites within Grand Rapids and establish new sites in out-county areas that have a high identified need.



■ **Middle & High School Years Committee (ages 10 to 18)**

The Middle & High School Years Committee is focusing its efforts on building assets in those youth with the highest risk of failing in school or engaging in risky behaviors such as substance abuse and gang involvement. While these higher-risk students are those who potentially have the most to gain from quality education, enrichment and recreational opportunities, they are also the least likely to have access to, or to take advantage, of such opportunities. The Middle & High School Years Committee is exploring possible strategies to improve our community's response to providing opportunities to these "hard to reach" youth.



■ **Ongoing Family Support (ages 18+)**

Over the past ten years, Kent County has made continuous improvements in the way it protects children from abuse and neglect. The community continues to seek out opportunities to enhance its efforts to keep children safe in their own homes. According to the Family Independence Agency, substance abuse is a primary cause for approximately 60 percent of child abuse or neglect cases resulting in removal of a child from the home. In response to this statistic, the Ongoing Family Support Committee is working with community partners to enhance current efforts to identify and treat substance abuse early for families at risk of child abuse or neglect.

Ongoing Oversight...

Another key component of the Council's restructuring was that the Kent County Board of Commissioners delegated certain duties of the Multi-Purpose Collaborative Body (MPCB) to the Council, which resulted in a more streamlined and efficient review and approval process for several community grant applications requiring MPCB review. Community initiatives which benefited from this process include Kent Intermediate School District's application for ASAP-PIE funding, Early On, the Child & Family Resource Council's reapplication for Children's Trust Fund funding, United Way's application for 211 designation, and Strong Families/Safe Children allocations.

Strong Families/Safe Children

Strong Families/Safe Children (SF/SC) funds are State funds designated for direct services that help keep children safe in their own homes (when appropriate), promote family strength and stability, enhance parental functioning, prevent the separation of families, and provide permanency for children. The Council is responsible for making recommendations for the allocation of SF/SC funds and providing oversight. As a result of FY2001 Strong Families/Safe Children allocations:

- **60 families received Adoption Support Services**, designed to increase the quality of family life and prevent or reduce disruptions by addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by adoptive families (Allocation: \$50,000).



100 percent of clients receiving direct services reported that they received the information they requested, and that the support they received was helpful.

- **164 families at risk of abuse or neglect received Perspective 21! Early Impact Services**, designed to improve parenting skills and decrease the family's risk for future abuse and neglect (Allocation: \$150,000).



88 percent of families who completed the services (145/164) had no substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect (category 1, 2, or 3) during the year.

- **81 families in which there was Court involvement due to abuse or neglect had the opportunity to participate in the Family and Community Compact program**, which aims to keep children safe in the family's kinship network rather than be placed in foster care (Allocation: \$123,900.00).



83 percent of families who completed the service in FY2000 (24/29) had achieved permanency for the children (reunification, guardianship, or adoption) within one year.*

- **687 first-time parents were referred to the Health Department for Healthy Start services, and 271 received assessments for Healthy Start**, a primary prevention program that provides family support services and information on child development to first time parents (Allocation: \$80,000).



*Of 687 the families referred, 252 families chose to receive Healthy Start home visitation services, ** and 234 families chose to participate in the phone call component.*

- **28 first-time parents received Healthy Start home visitation services, **** designed to help parents improve their parenting skills and locate resources that will ensure the healthy development of their children and families (Allocation: \$23,000).



98 percent of children served (26/28) received age appropriate immunizations, had a primary health care provider, and received their well-child visits. 100 percent of children (28/28) did not have a category 1 or 2 disposition (substantiated report) of child abuse or neglect.

**As Family & Community Compact objectives call for permanency within one year, FY2001 data will be available at the end of FY2002.*

***Healthy Start is a collaborative program with multiple funding streams. In FY2001, the program served a total of 252 families through its home visitation program. SF/SC funds financed referral processing and assessments, and funded home visitation services to 28 families.*

Ongoing Oversight, Continued...

Child Protection/Community Partners

Child Protection/Community Partners (CP/CP) is a State funding stream targeted toward children and families referred to Child Protective Services where there is no preponderance of evidence of child abuse or neglect (Category 4), or where there is preponderance but there is low or moderate risk of future harm to the child (Category 3). The Council is responsible for making recommendations regarding the allocations of CP/CP funds and providing oversight. As a result of Child Protection/Community Partners:

- **240 families at risk of abuse or neglect received Perspective 21! Early Impact Services**, a voluntary program which offers families counseling, parent education, child management techniques and tools, and help in meeting their needs through available resources (Allocation: \$213,000).

Looking Ahead...

The year 2001 was a time of reorganization and rebuilding for the Council. With the groundwork now laid for a more proactive structure, the Council is poised to take a strong leadership role in improving the lives of children, youth, and families in Kent County. The Council's Next Steps for 2002 include:



- Finalize committee Action Plans and begin implementation. Initial outcome data will be presented at the end of 2002.
- Ensure inclusion of outcome-based objectives and performance indicators for all Council supported programs and services, including SF/SC and CP/CP funded programs.
- Review current Council funding priorities and create a new multi-year plan for Strong Families/Safe Children allocations.



**Kent County
Family & Children's
Coordinating Council**

Kent County Administration Building
300 Monroe Avenue, NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503
(616) 336-2593 · fax (616) 336-2523
www.accesskent.com/kfcc