FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER ASSOCIATION (FRCA): EQUITY PLAN FOR COLORADO FAMILIES CASE STUDY

In recent years, the national conversation around racism and racial inequities has gained momentum, echoing an established understanding amongst the public health field that racial inequities are a key determinant of health and wellbeing.

Injuries and violence – the leading cause of death among persons ages 1-44 in the US - are inequitably distributed across communities, primarily and adversely impacting vulnerable communities with residents who have been historically marginalized. These communities are more likely to be communities of color enduring high rates of poverty, poor access to quality education, substandard housing, and frequent traumatizing events throughout their lives. These inequities are caused and driven by structural policies and systemic practices that maintain imbalances in access to wealth, power, and social resources necessary for achieving optimal health. These inequities and practices exist in every system in our society, and function in reinforcing ways, resulting in high levels of preventable experiences of injury and violence.[1]

In March 2022, Safe States launched the *Equity-Focused Approaches for Injury and Violence Prevention Seed Grant Program (Equity Seed Grant Program)*. Three organizations received seed grants to pilot or scale-up existing interventions to advance equity-focused efforts designed to address injury or violence prevention topic areas over a six-month period with projects ending in September 2022.

The foundation of this Equity Seed Grant Program stemmed from the 2021 Injury and Violence Prevention (IVP) Health Equity Scan conducted by Safe States in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The scan assessed how IVP programs and nationwide entities are addressing health and/ or racial equity in their work. Building on the formative work completed with the scan, Safe States held a special convening of the Injury and Violence Prevention Network (IVPN) to mobilize members and other professionals to identify opportunities within IVP to further address inequities through enhanced community engagement, partnership activities, and policy initiatives. Equity Seed Grantees were encouraged to frame their interventions based on the vision outlined in the IVPN special convening summary report and integrate equitable approaches to advance one or more needs identified in the summary report.

FCRA's Vision & Mission

The Family Resource Center Association (FRCA) is an intermediary and partner to Colorado's network of Family Resource Centers (FRCs). FRCs are family-friendly access points for numerous services tailored to the culture, resources, and needs of the communities they serve and use a whole family approach to help families achieve personal and family sustainability. FRCA is advancing and strengthening the field of family support with a unique, replicable model that shows statistically significant improvement in family stability, health, and well-being.
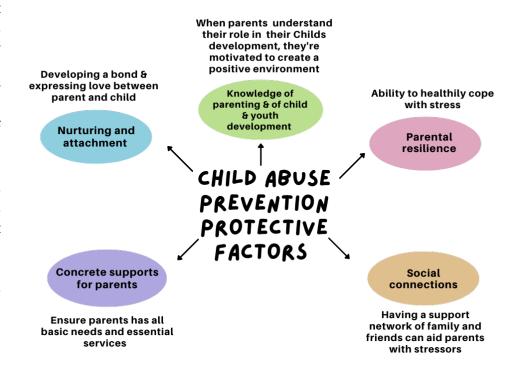
PROJECT GOALS AND PURPOSE

Embedding and Operationalizing Equity Practices

FRCA's family support services are set to help families achieve economic self-sufficiency and optimal health. The model is rooted in both the social determinants of health and the five key protective factors that are shown to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect (Figure 1). FRCA contracted with the University of Colorado's Center for Public Health Practice (CPHP) to expand their health equity knowledge, develop an equity assessment, develop their EDI action plans, and bring skill development to equip FRCA and their 32 member organizations (FRCs) to incorporate equity culture into their work. They continue to contract with CPHP for EDI training, action plan advancement needs, and technical assistance to implement FRCA's internal equity plan and guidance on a community level.

Through the Equity Seed Grant Program, FRCA proposed to build on their 2021 equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) plan created by their internal equity committee and CPHP to inform and strengthen FRCA's organizational culture, increase its effectiveness as a partner to family resource centers nationwide, and expand its model of family support services. In addition to FRCA's 2021 equity plan, each Family Resource Center (FRC) also created individual equity plans for their respective organizations. The goal of FRCA's equitable evaluation approach is to help minimize biases and help FRCs understand why some families do not seek family support services, particularly those belonging to marginalized communities. FRCA is working with an evaluator to measure project progress and outcomes.

When parents understand their role in their Childs development, they're motivated to create a positive environment
Knowledge of parenting & of child & youth development

Developing a bond & expressing love between parent and child
Nurturing and attachment

Ability to healthily cope with stress
Parental resilience

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Concrete supports for parents
Ensure parents has all basic needs and essential services

Social connections
Having a support network of family and friends can aid parents with stressors

Increased Capacity and Effectiveness: Prioritizing Health

The EDI plan is led by FRCA staff and members of its board of directors. From that group, four workgroups tackled specific sub-topical areas (training & development for the network, EDI internal onboarding, performance management, and creating spaces to have equity-focused conversations).

Based on goals outlined in the EDI plan, FRCA, in partnership with the CPHP, facilitated two learning sessions for Colorado's FRC staff. These sessions taught staff how to organize diverse community-level coalitions and shared skills for facilitating inclusive meetings and leading with an equity lens.

In addition to FRCA's EDI plan and implementation, FRCA's member FRCs have increasingly been implementing their own internal EDI plans. FRCA's equity committee committed to assisting the FRCs in this effort by identifying additional needs and ongoing EDI training and action plan advancement. The committee's purpose is to formalize FRCA's EDI Commitments and Call to Action to integrate and elevate principles of equity, belonging, justice and diversity across their network while expanding their services to other vulnerable populations.

CHALLENGES & SUCCESSES

Capacity among FRCs posed a key challenge for EDI implementation. Staff are interested in the new integration process, but there has been some concern for maintaining momentum due to capacity challenges. FRCA's equity committee is currently brainstorming incentives for reinforcing the principles of the EDI plan, as well as how to create consistent check-ins with the FRCs.

Despite challenges, FRCA has successfully accomplished strengthened EDI knowledge, competencies, and created safe spaces within individual FRCs. EDI self-reflection questions have been added to FRCA's annual performance evaluation, and an EDI training video will be added to new hire orientation. The self-reflection questions are intended to help staff reflect on how actively involved they are in advancing EDI at the organizational level and/or assist in identifying support areas needed for staff. Additionally, FRCA is looking to add EDI competencies for each of their performance areas (team building, quality of work, initiative, communications, etc.) to measure EDI performance for staff as part of their annual evaluation.

NEXT STEPS

FRCA will continue contracting with CPHP to provide advanced EDI training and technical assistance catered to each FRC's specific needs. FRCA plans to partner with the Colorado Department of Early Childhood to provide funding for additional EDI training by CPHP. They are continuing to finalize their evaluation process for their integration framework and anticipate an evaluation report to be completed during October 2022 so they can plan future outreach and trainings in partnership with CPHP.