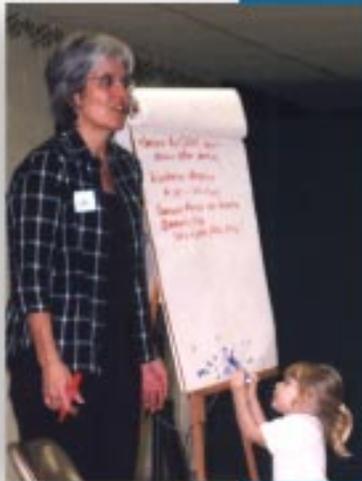




What Communities Say About the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families

November 2003

Organized by the West Virginia Community Voices Partnership, a project of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.





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*“We need a pure, true voice that is our hearts and our
desires - to bring about our will and our pleasure. We need
to go forward and not backward.”*

Barbour County forum participant



*Participants in the Kanawha County discussion.
Senator Larry Rowe (center) was a sponsor.*

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"We need a pure, true voice that is our hearts and our desires - to bring about our will and our pleasure. We need to go forward and not backward."

Barbour County discussion participant

About the Discussions

Through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the West Virginia Community Voices Partnership committed to planning and facilitating eleven separate community discussions on issues related to House Concurrent Resolution 47 and reporting on the findings to legislators studying the issue.

The 11 community forums were held in the following counties: Wood, Ritchie, Kanawha, Brooke, Raleigh, Webster, Wayne, Harrison, Barbour, Logan and Berkeley. They were spread out over a six-week period from mid August until the end of September. For communities without access to a discussion, a web response survey was developed.

- 238 community members participated in the community discussions.
- 25 legislators attended community discussions.
- 240+ visitors came to a website with an online forum process.

For more information contact:

WV Community Voices
1018 Kanawha Blvd. E. Suite 700
Charleston, WV 25305
(304) 558-0530
(304) 558-0532(fax)
www.wvvoices.org

What communities said...

- The community level work has been successful.
- Communities need support in their work.
- Funding for children and families needs to be protected.
- All families need a place to go for help.
- Communication between community programs and the state should improve.
- State officials should be expected to work together for children and families.

What communities said didn't work...

The state level Cabinet was never held accountable.

- No regular meetings.
- Reported only to themselves.
- No long term plan to improve outcomes for children.
- Structure subject to political changes.
- Weak connection to families and communities.

How communities reflected on the future...

Status quo - continue on the same path.

A new home - continue the community work but administer it somewhere else.

A new entity - create a public-private entity or a commission to continue the work.

A better Cabinet - continue the community work under the auspices of a re-energized Cabinet:

- maintain original legislative intent
- include families and communities
- keep new Cabinet mission focused
- hold new Cabinet accountable
- plan new Cabinet with community input

Remarks from community discussion participants

“We want to do real prevention work instead of waiting for families to crash and burn.”

Berkeley County participant

“It’s amazing what you can do when no one cares who gets the credit!”

Legislator

“We don’t look at income guidelines, we look at what families need. And then we fill that need.”

Webster County participant

“There are dynamic growth spurts. We are constantly starting and stopping. There has to be enough technical assistance and support and an investment in this process.”

Wayne County participant

“We believe that the technical assistants simply created too much paperwork and wanted us to serve their own initiatives. The Cabinet did not deliver us the resources we needed.”

Berkeley County participant

“Just because you eliminate the funding does not mean that the need will disappear.”

Harrison County participant

“You are going to keep whittling away at us until we are ineffective. You are setting us up for failure.”

Wayne County participant

“I don’t believe that one box fits all. We need to have flexibility in government.”

Webster County participant

“What we hear is, ‘We’re in trouble!’ or, ‘We need money!’ What we don’t hear are these great stories.”

Legislator

“We are expected to work together and collaborate at the local level. Should we expect no less of the highest government officials in the state?”

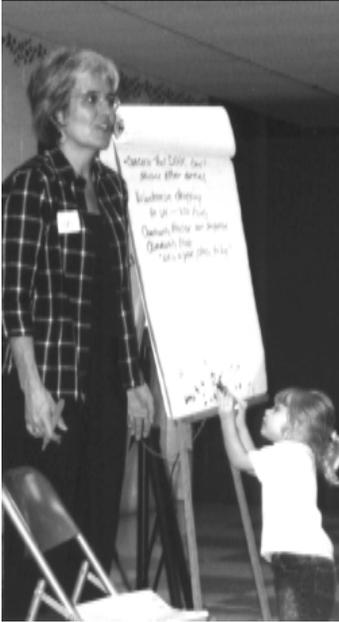
Raleigh County participant

“It’s not the name that is important, but that it remains, and that we have a neutral table. We must have a place to go, not only to complain, but to speak about what is good.”

Barbour County forum participant

“The Big Brother, red tape, coming to get you mentality is exactly what we DON’T want to do!”

Webster County forum participant



Report from **Community Discussions**

Background

The West Virginia Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families was one of the first state level structures of its kind in the country. It was established on the premise that children and families of West Virginia would be better served if there were a state level coordinating body to collaborate on issues and connect with local communities to learn about family needs.

Quickly after West Virginia's Cabinet legislation passed in 1990, other states followed. Many Cabinets and Commissions on Children or Children and Families were formed based on the model set forth by West Virginia. The community work of initiatives such as Family Resource Networks and Starting Points Centers in particular, received widespread national attention, and several other states began to look at West Virginia as a model for these structures.

In the 2003 Legislative session, both the House and Senate of the West Virginia Legislature on a voice vote unanimously passed House Concurrent Resolution 47, a study of the West Virginia Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families. The resolution was passed in response to a proposal by Governor Bob Wise to terminate the Cabinet and transfer its functions to the Department of Health and Human Resources. The Governor's proposal was met with opposition from advocates, particularly at a public hearing attended by nearly 300 individuals.

The Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families was established by the Legislature in 1990, in order to:

- Achieve the coordination of programs and services to children and families through a cabinet in the governor's office which is independent from any state agency.
- Nurture a flexible system for the comprehensive, unified, effective and efficient administration of programs and services to children and families.
- Avoid fragmentation and duplication of programs and services.
- Promote cooperation among state agencies, as well as regional, local and private service agencies.
- Emphasize preventive services to children and families in order to avoid the human and financial costs of individual and family instability and to benefit the state and society as a whole.
- Support a service delivery system that is driven by the needs and preferences of the child and family.
- Assure that the service delivery system involves the local community, reflects local characteristics and resources, and allows for local input.
- Encourage diversity and regional, cultural and ethnic sensitivity in the development of programs and services for children and families.

The fate of West Virginia’s Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families received national attention from the social services field and from national funders. After the study resolution was passed, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation expressed interest in funding a series of community forums to gather citizen input related to the study of the Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families. Robert Wood Johnson had already funded a series of parent involvement initiatives through the Cabinet office and this was an opportunity for families to contribute to an important policy decision.

The project was referred to the West Virginia Community Voices Partnership, one of thirteen national demonstration projects funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The philosophy of Community Voices is that communities, when given resources and support, are able to solve their own problems in a creative and efficient way. The Community Voices Partnership has participated in projects that encouraged public dialogue on a number of different issues including health care, family economic self-sufficiency and education.

Through this grant, the West Virginia Community Voices Partnership committed to planning and facilitating eleven separate community discussions on issues related to House Concurrent Resolution 47 and reporting on the findings to legislators studying the issue.

The Community Voices for Change project was designed as an opportunity to test a new kind of family leadership model. The process would give citizens the opportunity to be involved in the early stages of government decision-making rather than waiting for a bill to be introduced or passed. It would also provide legislators with an unprecedented opportunity to hear from and work with their constituents for solutions.

The term “Cabinet”

Throughout the community forums there was confusion about the meaning of the word “Cabinet”. Some citizens speaking about the “Cabinet” were referring to the state level board of members established in the statute. Others referred to the “Cabinet” in relation to the Cabinet staff, which included the director, technical assistants and other support staff. To reduce the confusion, this report will specifically refer to the “Cabinet proper” or the “Cabinet office” in such instances when the intent of the participant was clear.

Planning the Process

To ensure that community discussions were productive, effective vehicles for change and to maintain the integrity of the legislative study process, neutrality was an essential focus. This proved difficult as the political circumstances surrounding the Cabinet continued to change. The West Virginia Center for Civic Life worked with the project to design open-ended survey questions and facilitator guidelines that emphasized moving forward, rather than emotionally reflecting on the political circumstances of the past. Locations in neutral facilities such as community centers or libraries were chosen. Skilled facilitators with no connection to the Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families were selected to moderate the discussion groups. While a certain amount of “venting” in communities was inevitable, facilitators were conscious of the need to keep the discussion productive.

Nine of the discussions were held in the districts of the members of the Government Organization Subcommittee A - the joint committee studying House Concurrent Resolution 47. Two discussions were held in the southern part of the state, to ensure adequate geographic representation. They were spread out over a six-week period from mid August until the end of September.

Subcommittee A legislators were given the opportunity to participate in or “sponsor” the forums in their community. Senator Joseph Minard, Senator Larry Rowe, Delegate J.D. Beane, Delegate Tom Azinger and Delegate Mary Poling participated as sponsors, giving added support and credibility to the discussion in their community.

The discussions were promoted in the local media of each community. Invitations to the forum as well as promotional posters were sent by mail to Family Resource Networks, Children’s Trust Fund grantees, Starting Points Family Resource Centers, early parent education projects and local offices of the Department of Health and Human Resources. Legislators who were not members of Government Organization Subcommittee A also received a letter inviting them to participate. A website was posted to give local programs access to promotional materials that they could use to encourage citizen participation.

For communities without access to a discussion, a web response survey was developed. The website feedback process was promoted for two weeks by advertisements on Metro News Radio’s Talkline program. It was also promoted through e-mail listserves of advocacy and parent groups.

During the forums each attending legislator was invited to welcome and address their constituents. A background video was played to give citizens unfamiliar with the issue a common history with other members of the group. Participants responded to a series of questions posed by facilitators to focus the conversation on what communities valued about the work of the Cabinet, what they felt needed to be changed and what some suggestions for future decisions might be. At the end of the discussion, participants were invited to complete a survey to add their direct comments to the record. These comments have been included in this report.

Community Discussion Participation

The 11 community forums were held in the following counties: Wood, Ritchie, Kanawha, Brooke, Raleigh, Webster, Wayne, Harrison, Barbour, Logan and Berkeley.

Participation in the community discussions varied from community to community. Smaller groups of 10 or 12 were common. But particularly in smaller communities, participation would jump to 40 or even 60 participants. Discussions were held on weekday evenings. A total of 238 community members participated in the community discussions.

Many of the participants were already familiar with the issue and were knowledgeable about

the subject. Group participants included board members or coordinators of local Family Resource Networks or Starting Points Centers. However, participation overall was quite diverse. Participants included family court judges, DHHR case managers, private funders, medical practitioners, public health officials, business leaders, child advocates, local

“Why am I here? Because I think this system makes a difference. It helps children and families - that’s why I am here.”

Brooke County discussion participant

officials, state and national leaders, political candidates, social workers, media, Community Action agencies, students, professors, teachers and child care professionals. Families also came to the discussions to share their stories and voice their opinions.

Listening to the Community Voice

What communities value

It was very clear that the work of the Cabinet on Children and Families valued most by participants was the work happening in their own communities through their Family Resource Networks, Starting Points Centers and other initiatives.

Participants proudly shared their community success stories with each other and their legislators. They talked about developing programs to fill specific needs, bringing in grant funds to the community and their success in eliminating duplication of services. They attributed this success to several factors including neutrality, collaboration, flexibility and family participation.

Participants identified neutrality as a key ingredient to successful collaboration. “A neutral body allows individuals to have an equal voice and empowers them to address issues without fear of repercussion by an agency that may attempt to skew the outcome or results of a task team,” noted an Internet participant. As one legislator expressed it, “It’s amazing what you can do when no one cares who gets the credit!”

Although the difficulty of collaboration was often expressed, participants agreed that successful collaboration had greatly benefited their communities. “Turf is never going away,” noted a participant in a Brooke County discussion group, “but we have been able to reduce it in every one of our counties.” Collaboration was credited for helping to reduce duplication of services in some areas. A

web participant wrote that, “It’s very easy to stay isolated within your own organization and not be aware that others might be doing the same thing and that other needs aren’t being met at all for children and families within the community.”

The flexibility to meet the identified needs of the community in a non-prescriptive way was also seen as important. “I don’t believe that one box fits all,” said a Webster County participant. “We need to have flexibility in government.”

Participants also expressed the importance of the role of families as active participants in this community work. “The people that receive services should have a voice. Most programs decide services they will make available based on money and manpower. This is not always what citizens need,” said a Wood County participant. Family members spoke about how involvement in their communities had increased their confidence and made them aware of their ability to contribute to important decisions. “I personally have been empowered to speak at a forum like this,” shared a participant in Harrison County. “I bridge everything I am a part of to the FRN and being able to sit at the table.” “I am more powerful,” said a mother as she talked about her involvement with her local Starting Points Center. “I can advocate for my child, I can advocate for myself.”

“We want to do real prevention work instead of waiting for families to crash and burn.”

Berkeley County forum participant



Senator Ed Bowman (bottom right) and Delegate Tim Ennis (top left) discuss community challenges with their constituents at the Brooke County forum.

Starting Points and Family Resource Network representatives also noted that they valued the opportunity to serve all families and children without the restrictions of economic guidelines. “The whole point of having a Cabinet was that we all serve the same kids,” remarked a participant in Wayne County. A Webster County participant said, “We don’t look at income guidelines, we look at what the families need. And then we fill that need.” Another family member in Barbour County noted that, “People are people. No matter how you look at it.”

Representatives of the Cabinet’s community programs also demonstrated strong support for technical assistance. This emphasis may have been due in part to a recent downsizing of technical assistance staff at the Cabinet office. “The Cabinet staff was able to bring us information from different agencies and show us where we could find grants,” said one participant. Some participants discussed how technical staff had helped their community work through difficult problems. “He listened to us,” explained a participant in Barbour County. “He showed us how to focus on the most important needs of our community.” Many participants valued the manner in which technical assistance from the Cabinet office had been offered in the past. “Sometimes we need guidance and direction - not to tell us what to do, but to facilitate us.” One community noted that they relied on technical assistance in good times as well as bad. “There are dynamic growth spurts. We are constantly starting and stopping. It’s different than an agency. There has to be enough technical assistance and support and an investment in this chaotic process.” Another participant was blunt. “We want our technical assistance back. We don’t want new technical assistance, we want it the way it was with the same person who worked with us.”

It should be noted that these sentiments were not shared by all, however. In the Eastern Panhandle a FRN representative noted, “We believe that the technical assistants simply created too much paperwork and wanted us to serve their own initiatives. The Cabinet (office) did not deliver us the resources we needed.”

An overview of how technical assistance can be used in interagency collaboratives is included in this report.

What communities feel needs to change

Participants were open with legislators as they discussed their perceived weaknesses of the Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families.

It should be no surprise that adequate funding for the community work of the Cabinet was a top issue. Many participants equated state budget decisions to an expression of government’s low prioritization of the needs of children and families. “You can’t put dollar signs on our children.” “Government is supposed to serve the people, not the budget.” One participant said, “Just because you eliminate the funding this does not mean that the need will disappear.”

A foundation representative attending a forum expressed concern about frequent changes in state budget support for children and families. “Somebody put the money in, then somebody took the money out - but wait a minute - what about the kids here? Can we ever plan long term?”

The need for grant funding for survival was articulated in many groups. But as one participant noted, “If you live and die on grants, then you are dying.” “If you have a lot of vision, there is a lot of grantwriting to do,” said another.

“Who suffers are the families. We pull all of their support away and then we let them fall. There needs to be some constructive way to make better choices about eliminating important support.”

Barbour County forum participant

Community initiatives talked about recent cutbacks and how they could not survive another budget cut. “You are going to keep whittling away at us until we are ineffective,” said a Wayne County participant. “You are setting us up for failure.”

Both participants and legislators discussed the need for better communication between government and communities. One legislator asked, “How do we keep people connected to government? Children and families - those are the issues that get swept away.”

Citizens expressed frustration at government decisions being made without community input. “The government needs to listen to what people in the community are saying,” noted a Webster County participant. “We are the ones who know and do help our families.” They lamented that it was often the bad news and not the good news that got the attention of their representatives. “Failures of agencies make the news, not success stories,” said one participant.

Legislators expressed concerns that they were hearing many of the community success stories for the first time. “What we tend to hear is a pretty sanitized version of things,” explained one legislator. “What we hear is, ‘We’re in trouble!’ or, ‘We need money!’ What we don’t hear are these great stories.” They encouraged citizens to accelerate one on one contact with their elected officials.

“It’s not the name that is important, but that it remains, and that we have a neutral table. We must have a place to go, not only to complain, but to speak about what is good.”

Barbour County forum participant

The effectiveness of the state level Cabinet proper (which did not usually mean the Cabinet office and staff) was a major topic of discussion at every forum. Participants expressed concerns that the members of the Cabinet proper had not been meeting regularly and did not seem to have a focused plan of action. “I’m not sure the family voice is getting where it needs to go. If the Cabinet (proper) is not meeting, it’s not getting there,” said one participant.

Family members were frustrated that citizen representatives are no longer included as members of the Cabinet proper and are now asked to serve in an advisory capacity. “If you don’t have a vote, you don’t have a voice. I want to be a citizen that has an equal vote.”

Participants articulated a lack of patience for “turfism” between the members of the state level Cabinet. “From day one there was animosity,” noted a former state employee. “They still have their own separate agendas. They are not likely to compromise.” “We are expected to collaborate and work together at the local level,” said one participant. “Should we expect no less of the highest government officials in this state?”

What happens next?

In each forum, participants were asked to look toward the future and discuss possible solutions. What would a functioning entity for children and families look like? What is the Utopia for children and families?

In nearly every forum, there were no easy answers to these questions. Participants struggled to formulate thoughts. They accessed the knowledge of their legislators to “test” their ideas. They brainstormed on how to move their work forward and build a stronger system for children and families. The ideas generated broke out into the following categories:

Status Quo

Some participants noted that the best action was no action at all. “Tread water for awhile” suggested a legislator. Another legislator offered, “Let’s get it back where it was, and then we can improve it.” “I’m not sure the Cabinet was as broken as being portrayed,” said a Ritchie County participant. “My Utopia is - leave it alone,” said another. “It works. That’s the bottom line.”

A New Home

Potential future homes for the work of the Cabinet were discussed. They included such possibilities as the Department of Administration and Community Action agencies. One participant suggested a “Legislature’s Cabinet on Children and Families.” Participants did note however that any move should be carefully planned. “If you move us somewhere, please make absolutely sure it is the right place.”

For many however, merging with another agency was not a comfortable alternative. “I have a hard time coming up with any benefits to doing this,” said one participant. “If we are merged, it will not work.”

A New Entity

The possibility of a private-public partnership or the development of an independent Commission was also discussed. Participants noted that a public-private partnership would ensure neutrality and be a vehicle for attracting more private dollars. There was support for a Commission structure, and more specific discussions about a Citizen’s Commission. Some legislators, however, were skeptical about the overall effectiveness of a Commission structure.

A Revamped Cabinet for Children and Families

By far, the most popular suggestion was to revisit the legislation establishing the Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families to strengthen what has worked and address the weaknesses.

Participants were clear about protecting the community work in any new version of the Cabinet. One survey participant wrote, “The Governor’s Cabinet has been instrumental in highlighting the importance of prevention/family support services; involving consumers in a meaningful way; quality and effective early care and education programs and local collaborative planning. I would hope to maintain those priorities in whatever structure comes next.”

Key to a new Cabinet would be the active role of family and community representatives as members of the Cabinet proper. This was a prominent theme in nearly all of the community discussions. One function this would serve is to enhance communication between state government and local communities. “Right now, the people sitting at the table aren’t aware of what happens in the communities because they aren’t in the trenches,” noted a Harrison County participant. Another participant noted that a role that families would play would be to infuse energy into the process. “Sometimes it takes somebody with the passion to drive everybody else. You need families that are going to drive it and people (staff) need to do the work.”

Participants noted a need for continuity from administration to administration. One legislator pointed out, “We need to look at the structure so you don’t get into a political mess every time there is an administration change.” A participant noted, “When the Governor changes, the players change. There must be continuity.”

“The Big Brother, red tape, coming to get you mentality is exactly what we DON’T want to do!”

Webster County forum participant

Accountability for the revamped Cabinet was also discussed. “If they only meet once a year, there will be no ownership. There needs to be clearly defined expectations.” A Barbour County forum participant said, “We have to show accountability, affordability and efficiency at every level.”

Many felt that the Cabinet should remain in the Governor’s office. “There is some prestige, being associated with the Governor,” said a Wood County participant. “It opens doors for us and helps get things done.” Groups discussed ways to lessen the Cabinet’s political vulnerability.



Ideas included stronger legislative representation and allowing the Cabinet to choose its own director, rather than the director being a political appointee.

Participants were adamant that whatever the change, citizens should be involved players in planning the next steps and the transition. “You can’t ask the people who created the problem to solve the problem. We need to be a part of the solution.”

Conclusion

Communities are ready for change that preserves what has worked well in communities and strengthens the weaknesses of the current legislation. However, both legislators and citizens feel that families and other stakeholders must be included in this process. Stakeholder groups must continue to work closely with legislative staff, the governor’s office and communities to develop a new solution that strengthens West Virginia’s children and families.

Diverse opinions on accountability

Although each community discussion was unique, common threads, as discussed in this report, were easily identifiable, with one exception. In discussions about accountability of local programs such as Family Resource Networks, Starting Points Centers and early parent education programs to the Cabinet office, opinions varied greatly. The following are excerpts on this topic of discussion:

“Some of the FRNs are very successful and make an impact on the children and families of their respective counties. But those that are not doing the job that FRNs should be doing must be reorganized and mentored by the successful FRNs and the central group charged with the job of overseeing the success of each FRN.”

Jenny Bailey - Wood County

“The reporting is too lengthy and time consuming. Other grants that we have require much smaller reports. We need to be left alone. We can be self-sufficient. Everything we do should just be for children and families, not for reporting.”

Berkeley County forum participant

“A lot of the time the coordinator spent doing things is now spent on counting things. That’s bureaucracy seeping in.”

“We should have accountability, but it should be in the form of local meetings. Judge us by what is happening here, not elsewhere in the state.”

Webster County forum participant

“We are missing a police force that will take care of a problem FRN. The accountability is there - but there is no policing of that.”

“Let communities rise and fall on their own sword!”

Ritchie County participants

“For the amount of money we are given we are asked to do so little. We are told to use it for the needs of our communities and we are trusted to do that. The accountability measures are extremely reasonable.”

Brooke County participant



State Profiles

As part of the Community Voices for Change project, a brief summary describing children's cabinets and commissions and coordinating structures in other states is provided as a reference in this report. Stakeholders, legislators and legislative staff working together can utilize this information to craft new ideas. These descriptions provide only a brief overview of the work of these states - website addresses and contact information are included so that additional information can be obtained as needed. This list is not meant to be comprehensive of structures nationwide, but a sampling of different strategies being utilized by some states.

ALABAMA

The mission of the *Alabama Department of Children's Affairs* is to assist state leadership in identifying, streamlining and coordinating services for children ages 0-19 throughout Alabama. This is accomplished through the divisions within the Department of Children's Affairs which are Service Information and Evaluation, Service Funding and Training, Service Coordination, Office of School Readiness, Alabama Head Start State Collaboration Office, Office of Multiple Needs Children and Children Trust Fund Administration. The Department has a multitude of responsibilities which include educating and informing legislators about issues affecting children, seeking and applying for federal and private grants to fund children's programs, reviewing budget requests for children's services and serving as a liaison between the Governor and state agencies providing programs or services for children. It is a freestanding state agency.

Alabama Department of Children's Affairs
RSA Tower, Suite 1670
201 Monroe Street
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2755
<http://dca.state.al.us/mission.htm>

CALIFORNIA

The *California Children and Families Commission* was created by the California Children and Families Act of 1998, and was designed to provide, on a community-by-community basis, all children prenatal to five years of age with a comprehensive, integrated system of early childhood development services. Funding is directed to local communities to fill gaps and create new crosscutting projects that bring together resources from different programs and parts of the community to serve young children in a new and more efficient way.

California Children and Families Commission
501 J Street, Suite 530
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 323-0056
<http://www.cafc.ca.gov>

COLORADO

The *Colorado Foundation for Children and Families* was founded in 1991 and serves as an intermediary for the executive branch in Colorado. It is a (501)(c)(3) corporation with a nine-member board of directors. The board is comprised of four public agency heads and five private citizens. Officers are private citizens. Activities include research, program and policy development, program management, support services and evaluation.

Colorado Foundation for Families and Children
303 East 17th Avenue, Suite 400
Denver, CO 80203
303-837-8466
<http://www.coloradofoundation.org>

CONNECTICUT

The *Connecticut Commission on Children and Families* was created in 1985 to promote public policies in the best interest of children. The Commission brings 25 government representatives from the legislative, executive and judicial branches together with the private sector to conduct research and enlist the support of leaders in business, health, education and media. The Commission reviews coordination and assesses programs and practices, serves as a liaison between government and private groups and makes recommendations to the Legislature and Governor.

Connecticut Commission on Children and Families
18-20 Trinity Street
Hartford, CT 06106
860-240-0290
<http://www.wa.gov/fpc/home.html>

GEORGIA

The *Georgia Family Connection Partnership* is a public/private partnership created by the State of Georgia and private sector funders. The Partnership assists communities in addressing the serious challenges facing Georgia's children and families. The Partnership works jointly with community collaborative, state and national partners to provide training and technical assistance, build relationships with public and private agencies and communities, enhance public awareness and promote what works using effective research and evaluation practices.

Georgia Family Connection Partnership
235 Peachtree Street
North Tower, Suite 1600
Atlanta, GA 30303
404-527-7394
<http://www.gacfp.org>

HAWAII

The *Hawaii Good Beginnings Trust* is a non-profit established by legislation as a public/private partnership to create a coordinated early care and education system for Hawaii. It is a statewide, non-profit membership organization that supports county-based local councils. The Board of Directors is primarily made up of private citizens with representation from each of the four councils and a state representative from the Interdepartmental Council.

The *Interdepartmental Council* is a state cross-agency collaboration and decision-making body of early childhood education and care. The members are cabinet-level state officials from the governmental departments that oversee children's issues.

Good Beginnings Alliance
33 South King Street, Ste 200
Honolulu, HI 96813
808-531-5502
<http://www.goodbeginnings.org/>

IOWA

The *Iowa Empowerment Board* was created to facilitate state and community efforts involving community empowerment areas, including strategic planning, funding identification and guidance. The Board also works to promote collaboration among state and local education, health and human services programs, business, faith communities and others that may contribute to successfully caring for Iowa's children. A technical assistance system is in place to support the work of community empowerment areas. The Iowa Empowerment Board must also disseminate information to the Governor and Iowa General Assembly on the needs of communities and progress made toward achieving results. This progress is measured through the use of indicators of performance. The Board consists of 17 voting members with 13 citizen members and four state agency members. They are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.

Iowa Empowerment Board
Department of Management
State Capitol, Room 12
Des Moines, IA 50319
515-281-4537
www.empowerment.state.ia.us

KANSAS

The 1999 Legislative session created the *Kansas Children's Cabinet* to oversee the expenditures from the Master Tobacco Settlement. 95% of the state's portion of the settlement was dedicated to improving the health and well-being of the children of the state. Responsibilities include advising the Governor and Legislature on use of moneys credited to the Children's Initiative's Fund, evaluating programs that use money from the Fund, assisting the Governor in developing and implementing a coordinated delivery system and supporting the prevention of child abuse and neglect through the Children's Trust Fund. The fifteen member Cabinet includes five voting members appointed by the Governor, four voting members appointed by Legislative leadership and six ex-officio members who represent state government offices.

Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund
Landon State Office Building
900 SW Jackson Street Room 152
785-368-7044
<http://www.kschildrenscabinet.org/>

LOUISIANA

The *Louisiana Children's Cabinet* is a policy office in the Office of the Governor created by the Louisiana Legislature. The Cabinet's primary function is to coordinate children's policy across the departments that provide services for young people. Each year, the cabinet makes recommendations to the Governor on funding priorities for new and expanded programs for children and youth. The Cabinet is responsible for recommendations of a Children's Budget, which is a compilation of appropriations which fund services and programs for children and families. The Children's Cabinet Advisory Board was created to provide information and recommendations from the perspective of advocacy groups, service providers and parents to the Children's Cabinet. The Advisory Board appoints one of its members to the Cabinet to serve with other state agency leaders.

Louisiana Children's Cabinet
P.O. Box 94004, 6th Floor
State Capitol Building
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9004
225-342-3327
<http://www.gov.state.la.us/ldbc/childrenscabinet/ChildrensHome.htm>

MAINE

The mission of the *Maine Children's Cabinet* is to actively collaborate to create and promote coordinated policies and service delivery systems that support children, families and communities. It was established in 1995 and is composed of state departments directly related to children and families. The Cabinet appoints regional children's cabinets to implement the work at the regional and local levels. It also evaluates the allocation of resources, conducts long range planning and policy development, improves policies and programs, communicates with the public on its work and conducts program implementation and oversight. The Cabinet is overseen by the Governor's office. Department senior staff, representatives from the Governor's Office and other key individuals serve as resources and provide staffing to the Children's Cabinet.

The *Maine Council on Children and Families* was established in 1999 to receive reports from, advise and make policy recommendations to the Governor, the Children's Cabinet, the Legislature and the judiciary. It is composed of five state level commissioners and seven legislators. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court is also asked to serve. It is charged with encouraging a coordinated system, promoting coordinated budgets and policy, evaluating allocation of resources, evaluating program effectiveness and promoting a plan for exchanging information between the various services for children and families. The Council is located in the Governor's office and staffing assistance must be coordinated by the Office of the Governor.

The *Maine Children's Trust* is a statewide non-profit established by the Maine legislature to evaluate child abuse and neglect prevention needs throughout the state and take necessary steps to help meet those needs. The trust raises and distributes money to community-based programs

The Pros and Cons of State Collaborative Organizations Within the Governor's Office

Benefits:

- Cross-system vision and strategies for shared results.
- Has the clout, visibility and leadership of the executive branch.
- Ability to leverage state resources to achieve results.
- Potential to incorporate new, common approaches in state operations.

Potential Challenges:

- Vulnerable to changes in administration and priorities.
- Depends largely on governor's commitment and leadership.
- State agency leaders seldom hold each other accountable.
- Stakeholders may view it as owned by the executive branch.

Source: Susan Robison, National Conference of State Legislatures Human Services Reform Project

for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Federal and private funds are administered by the trust. The Maine Children's Trust has a 17-member board of directors established in state code. The board includes a member of the State Senate and House of Representatives, two representatives appointed by the Commissioner of Human Services, and other members appointed by the Governor.

State of Maine Office of the Governor
#1 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0001
207-287-3531

Maine Children's Cabinet
<http://www.state.me.us/cabinet/homepage.htm>

Maine Council on Children and Families
<http://janus.state.me.us/legis/statutes/5/title5ch438sec0.html>

Maine Children's Trust
8 Mulliken Court St.
Augusta, Maine
207-623-5120
<http://www.mechildrenstrust.org/>

MARYLAND

The *Maryland Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families* promotes interagency collaboration and increased partnership opportunities across the state. The Subcabinet is located in the Office of Children, Youth and Families, which is part of the Governor's office. The Subcabinet provides leadership and policy direction to the Governor, Lt. Governor and the Legislature. It includes various state level Secretaries and other agency representatives as designated by the Governor. The Subcabinet Partnership Team, made up of a Deputy Secretary and the Chief Financial Officer of each Subcabinet agency, addresses day-to-day operations and makes policy recommendations to the Subcabinet. The focus of the Subcabinet and the Office of Children,

Youth and Families is on creating a child and family friendly delivery system, addressing significant issues with a coordinated approach to policy and resources, promoting results-based accountability through developing performance goals, collecting and analyzing data and using performance information to inform officials, and giving local jurisdiction for decision making and the flexibility to manage resources locally.

Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families
301 W. Preston Street, Suite 1502
Baltimore, MD. 21201
410-767-4160
<http://ocyf.state.md.us/>

MISSOURI

The *Missouri Family and Community Trust* spearheads the state's system reform initiative to achieve Missouri's Mission for children to have strong families, and communities where parents are working, children succeeding in school and growing up healthy, safe and prepared to enter productive adulthood. This mission is measured by progress toward six core results, four guiding principles and four systems change policy directions. The Family and Community Trust (FACT) was created by Governor Carnahan through Executive Order in 1993. It is a state level, public-private partnership that steers Missouri's strategic direction for change. FACT's purpose is to change how communities and state government work together to improve results for families and children. The Family and Community Trust Board of Directors is composed of seven public members (directors of seven state agencies) and eight private members (leaders of Missouri business, higher education, philanthropy, and civic organizations).

The Family and Community Trust
Interim Office c/o CEU
3418 Knipp Drive
Jefferson City, MO 65109
573-526-3581
<http://www.mofit.org>

NEW MEXICO

The *New Mexico Children's Cabinet* was created in 2003 by executive order and is made up of heads of state agencies and departments that deal with children. The Cabinet is housed in the office of the lieutenant governor, who is also the chair. The aim of the Cabinet is to focus state resources on improving the lives of New Mexico's children by increasing interaction between state departments in an effort to streamline services and reduce bureaucratic red tape. It also tracks child well-being indicators. A large part of the effort includes planning of economic development policies. The New Mexico Cabinet is required to meet at least twice a year with children's advocates, professionals, educators, health care providers, and representatives of a Youth Council.

New Mexico Children's Cabinet
Office of the Lt. Governor Diane D. Denish
State Capitol, Suite 417
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501
800-432-4406
<http://www.governor.state.nm.us/ltgov/childrenscabinet.html>

The Pros and Cons of State Collaborative Organizations Within a State Human Services Agency

Benefits:

- Potential to incorporate and build on new state-local partnerships in agency operations.
- Existing capacity of staff, data systems, funding facilities and other resources.
- Ability to redirect and leverage program and agency resources to achieve results.
- May be easier to engage state agency if it has organizational control.

Potential Challenges:

- Stakeholders are likely to view the collaborative as owned by the agency
- Often difficult to engage citizens and families.
- May be difficult to obtain foundation and other private funding.
- Other state agencies are likely to see little benefit of collaboration.
- Depends largely on agency leader's commitment and leadership. Vulnerable to changes in leadership.
- To accomplish results requires state-local partnerships that are likely to challenge agency status quo.
- Initiatives are easily sabotaged by agency if its interests are threatened.
- May be unable to rally other agencies or hold them accountable.

**Note that this option is not recommended by legislative champions*

Source: Susan Robison, National Conference of State Legislatures Human Services Reform Project

NEW YORK

The *New York Council on Children and Families* was established in Executive Law in 1977 to improve and strengthen services to children and families provided at the state and local levels by public and private organizations. The Council does not have responsibility for the operation of programs or the provision of services, allowing it to be a neutral forum for the identification and resolution of issues within an interagency framework. The Council is able to carry out its mission with the support of the commissioners or directors of the state's 13 health, education and human service agencies that make up its membership.

New York State Council on Children and Families
5 Empire State Plaza Suite 2810
Albany, NY 12223-1553
518-473-3652
<http://www.ccf.state.ny.us>

NORTH CAROLINA

The *North Carolina Partnership for Children* was established in 1993 to provide statewide oversight of the Smart Start initiative. Smart Start is a public-private initiative that provides early education funding to all of the state's 100 counties. It provides technical assistance and training for local Smart Start partnerships in the areas of program development, administration, organizational development, communication, fiscal management, technology, contracts management and fundraising. It must adhere to a comprehensive accountability program.

North Carolina Partnership for Children
1100 Wake Forest Road
Raleigh, NC
919-821-7999
www.ncsmartstart.org

OHIO

Ohio Family and Children First (OCFC) is a partnership of government agencies and community organizations committed to improving the well-being of children and their families. As a multi-agency umbrella, OFCF focuses on bringing individuals, agencies and organization together to better serve children and their families. It was created by state law in 1993 and housed in the Governor's Office. The leadership is made up of a designee of the Governor and the directors of state agencies providing services to families and their children. There are local family and children first councils in all of Ohio's 88 counties and at least three family representatives must serve on each local council.

Ohio Family and Children First
30 East Broad Street
34th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215
614-752-4044
<http://www.ohiofcf.org>

OKLAHOMA

The *Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth* was created by the Legislature for the purposes of providing independent oversight of the children and youth service system, assisting local communities in the development of partnership boards to improve and increase needed services for children and their families, and to provide leadership on children's issues through test models and demonstration projects. The Office of Planning and Coordination has the responsibility to assist the Commission in establishing Community Partnership Boards, developing guidelines for board memberships and providing technical support to the local boards.

Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth
500 N. Broadway, Suite 30
Oklahoma City, OK 73102
405-606-4900
www.okkids.org

OREGON

The *Oregon Commission on Children and Families* (OCCF) is a partnership of citizens and professionals working together to improve the lives of children and families in Oregon's local communities. OCCF facilitates and supports local coordinated comprehensive planning for all children and families, promotes system integration, and provides leadership for local and state offices focused on early childhood. The State Commission does not provide direct services, but sets guidelines for comprehensive planning by local commissions, encourages the development of innovative projects, reviews local plans and makes recommendations for the state's child care plan. The majority of the state commission are laypersons and each term is four years. The Governor selects a layperson as the chair.

Oregon Commission on Children and Families
Equitable Building
530 Center Street NE, Suite 405
Salem, Oregon 97310
503-373-1283
<http://www.ccf.state.or.us/>

RHODE ISLAND

The *Rhode Island Children's Cabinet* was created in 1991 by state law to address all cross-departmental issues that relate to children's needs and services. The RI Cabinet identifies goals and objectives in a five year plan and reports on its activities to the legislature three times a year. It functions as an information exchange forum among state departments, private service agencies and the public. It also produces an annual children's budget. The RI Cabinet is established within the executive branch of state government and is comprised of state agency leaders. The department of administration provides staff support.

Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908
401-222-7901
<http://www.planning.state.ri.us/children/default.htm>

TENNESSEE

The *Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth* is an independent agency created by the Tennessee Legislature to advocate for legislation, policies and programs, provide regional councils, educate the community about the problems of children, coordinate efforts to enhance services, evaluate services and make recommendations on the needs of children and youth. The Commission staffs and coordinates nine regional councils. The Commission includes 21 members who are appointed by the governor. At least one member is appointed from each of Tennessee's nine development districts. There are also five youth advisory members.

Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
710 James Robertson Parkway, Ninth Floor
Nashville, TN 37243-0800
615-741-2633
<http://www.state.tn.us/tccy/>

WASHINGTON

In 1992 the Washington State legislature enacted the Family Policy Initiative, which created the *Family Policy Council* to design and carry out principle-centered, systemic reforms to improve outcomes for children, youth and families. The Council is composed of the heads of the five state agencies dealing with children and family services, four members of the legislature, and a representative from the Governor's office. The Council oversees grassroots Community Public Health and Safety Networks which locally address seven identified policy areas. The networks assess strengths and concerns in their community, research effective strategies, and devise local solutions to build on the assets and address concerns in order to improve outcomes for children, youth and families.

Washington State Family Policy Council
P.O. Box 45015
Olympia, Washington 98504-5015
360-902-7880
<http://www.wa.gov/fpc/home.html>

The Pros and Cons of State Collaborative Organizations Within Another State Agency

Benefits:

- May be viewed as neutral by other state agencies.
- Existing capacity of staff, data systems, funding, facilities and other resources.

Potential Challenges:

- Depends on the agency leader's commitment, leadership, and credibility with other stakeholders.
- Vulnerable to changes in agency leadership.
- May be difficult to obtain foundation and other private funding.
- May be unable to rally other agencies or hold them accountable.

Freestanding State Agency (*within executive branch or legislature*)

Benefits:

- Has its own authority and legitimacy.
- Relatively independent of other state agencies' influence.
- May be regarded as a neutral forum for negotiation and problem-solving.
- May be well-positioned to provide oversight of state agencies and communities.
- May be easier to engage citizens, community stakeholders and other interests.

Potential Challenges:

- May be vulnerable to budget cuts unless they have strong legislative champions.
- May be perceived as a threat by state service agencies, making collaboration difficult.
- May lack credibility and influence especially with state agencies.
- May be viewed as additional bureaucracy or another layer of government.

Nonprofit Organization

Benefits:

- May be easier to raise foundation and other private funds.
- May be regarded as neutral by communities and citizens.
- Well positioned to leverage business and other private sector resources.

Potential Challenges:

- May be more difficult to raise government funding.
- May lack credibility and influence within state government.
- Lacks authority and legitimacy to hold agencies accountable.

Source: Susan Robison, National Conference of State Legislatures Human Services Reform Project



Overview of Technical Assistance

During the Community Voices for Change discussions, many participants expressed their support for a strong technical assistance component at the state level to help support and advance their work at the local level. Recent downsizing of technical assistants at the Governor's Cabinet on Children and Families office contributed to the interest in this topic. Participants debated the role of technical assistance from advisory only to "policing" outcomes. They discussed the advantages and disadvantages of a peer to peer technical assistance system. Some participants expressed a desire to have the former staff return while others asked for more flexibility in how technical assistance dollars were spent.

As Cabinet reform is discussed in West Virginia, it is important to communities that the issue of technical assistance is addressed in a way that strengthens and improves support to local communities. Technical assistance is a necessity for initiatives such as West Virginia's Family Resource Networks and Starting Points Centers that involve cross-agency work. Service integration strategies involve a long list of challenges, including reducing fragmentation, duplication and accessing a myriad of resources. Participants in these efforts must learn the language, structures and goals of their partners. They must agree to share - which is often difficult.

Reasons Groups Seek Technical Assistance

- They need expertise that they currently do not possess which can be provided through outside consultants.
- They want a working knowledge of, and the ability to draw lessons from, other similar state or community efforts.
- They need time- and resource limited assistance.
- They need an independent perspective that will be regarded as legitimate and impartial to all participants.
- They need technical assistance that cuts across a number of professional disciplines and can effectively reach service providers across the disciplines.

Source: Bruner, Charles. "So You Think You Need Some Help? Making Effective Use of Technical Assistance."

Criteria for Effective Technical Assistance

It is important not to think of technical assistance providers as those who “police” or hold groups responsible for outcomes or as consultants who are supposed to single-handedly “fix” a problem for a collaborative. Technical assistance providers do not solve problems alone, and a collaborative should not become dependent on them to fix problems. In reality, “fixing” the problem should be the work of the group seeking the assistance.

Technical assistance should be used in a proactive way, rather than waiting for a crisis to happen. Proactive approaches anticipate local needs and include documents developed to address typical concerns, best practices information and training and a range of planning activities to address policy implementation issues or trends in services.

Technical assistants should not be depended on to do the work of a collaborative. In fact, the work and recommendations of technical assistants often place new responsibilities and demands on the collaborative as they implement new strategies. Technical assistance should not be viewed as a solution to staffing issues.

Independence from the group is seen as a plus, allowing the provider to remain neutral in disputes and maintain credibility as the group works through difficult problems. The technical assistant must be free to serve all those involved in the collaborative. Equity in the provision of technical assistance from one group to another is also important in building trust.

Relationships are key. The technical assistance process is a two-way relationship that requires communication and trust to be effective. This interactivity is important to the provider’s ability to pass on skills to the collaborative participants so that they can address future problems and challenges on their own.

The experience and consistency of the technical assistance provider is also important. The provider must understand and appreciate the history and group dynamics within the state or community. A long-term relationship with a technical assistance provider enhances effectiveness. The group must also understand that no technical assistant can have experience in all disciplines - and the technical assistant should acknowledge any gaps in their knowledge that need to be filled. It is expensive, in lost time and lost momentum, to educate new providers about a collaborative’s past history and current situation. It is often impossible to regain lost trust with the members of a collaborative if a provider is ineffective or must be replaced.

Questions Asked of Technical Assistants

From the Iowa Community Empowerment Areas

- Information regarding legislation
- Basic organizational questions
- State and local relationship building
- Board development
- Typical management
- Data management
- Evaluation
- Accountability
- Program planning
- Needs assessment
- How to get collaboration/involvement
- Building local capacity and system change

Methods of Technical Assistance Delivery

Across the country, technical assistance to cross-agency collaboratives is approached in a number of ways.

Workshops and training opportunities with experts can be arranged so that the members of a collaborative can obtain a common knowledge about a particular issue or problem they are addressing in their communities. While this is a good strategy for launching an initiative, it does

Critical Roles of Technical Assistance Providers

- Relationship builders who create a supportive environment for technical assistance recipients.
- Facilitators who help technical assistance recipients identify problems and issues and the most appropriate ways to address them.
- Brokers who coordinate the assistance needed by technical assistance recipients.
- Information specialists who organize and analyze information and provide it to the technical assistance recipients.

Source: Buckley, J. and Mank, D. "New perspectives on training and technical assistance: Moving from assumptions to focus on quality."

not provide the ongoing support needed to see a project through to successful implementation. Workshops and trainings are a form of technical assistance best used in conjunction with a more consistent approach.

Sometimes technical assistance is provided in the form of staff persons who contract with or are employed by a sponsoring agency. A positive aspect of this approach is consistency in staff allowing collaboratives to build trust and momentum. Drawbacks include a lack of diversity in expertise and the perception that the technical assistant is loyal to the agency that employs them, rather than to the collaborative.

A more flexible approach to technical assistance is to employ staff who "broker" other technical assistants with the expertise to address a collaborative's unique issues and problems. Using this model, there is someone who knows the personalities involved in the collaborative and the history of the initiative. The staff person provides continuity and develops trust and can brief other professionals who come to assist on different topics.

An open-ended model of technical assistance lets the collaborative control the design of the assistance. The collaborative may be provided with technical assistance funds that can be used in a way that the collaborative feels best fits their unique needs. However, some guidelines and reporting functions may need to be incorporated into this process so that there is accountability on the use of funds.

In summary, the research shows that good technical assistance solutions for West Virginia must be:

- **Targeted** The specific needs of the communities served must be identified and resources must be matched to those needs.
- **Neutral** Neutrality is important to the credibility of the technical assistance provider. If technical assistance is to result in the development and implementation of a plan agreed to by a number of different organizations, the technical assistant must be loyal to that joint agenda, rather than any one specific organization.
- **Flexible** The ability of the technical assistant to address the needs and respect the individuality of the community is critical. Collaboratives should have the flexibility to employ a variety of technical assistance strategies.
- **Qualified** Groups must enlist individuals with recognized subject expertise who also have well-developed facilitation and problem solving skills.
- **Enriching** The technical assistance provider must be able to introduce the collaborative to opportunities to enhance their learning and development.

Sources:

Bruner, Charles (1993). "So You Think You Need Some Help? Making Effective Use of Technical Assistance". National Center for Service Integration.

Buckley, J. and Mank, D. (1994). "New perspectives on training and technical assistance: Moving from assumptions to focus on quality". Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 19 (3):223-232.

Russell, W. (2002) "High quality technical assistance". Washington, D.C. National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform.

"Technical Assistance to Iowa's Community Empowerment Areas" (2000) Iowa Empowerment Board.



Participant Comments

Participants in the Community Voices discussions and visitors to the project website were given the opportunity to put their comments “on the record” by answering open-ended questions on a survey. The questions were as follows:

1. How should community decisions about needs feed into government decisions about services?
2. How can citizens, communities and government work together?
3. What is an efficient way to fund programs that meet the needs of children and families?
4. What is an efficient way to fund programs that meet the needs of children and families?
5. What tools do citizens, communities and government need to work together?
6. Do you have any thoughts or idea you would like to share with your legislators?

Respondents’ written answers were collected and are printed unedited, in this report.

#1 How should community decisions about needs feed into government decisions about services?

They should be foremost.”

*Paula Green, Webster County Economic Development Authority
Webster County*

“Because all communities have unique needs, they should all be considered individually.”

*Vicki Hamrick, Webster County Board of Education
Webster County*

“Show me the advantages.”

Anonymous - Webster County

“The government needs to see how our community works - listen to what the people in the community are saying. We are the ones who know and do help our families.”

Anonymous - Webster County

“As we currently are through our FRN. We have utilized this mechanism since 1989. Throughout the years the FRN has not done anything but positively grow and function with a minimum of funding.”

Terry Lee Webb, Seneca Health Services/ Webster County FRN Founder and current member

“It should be the driving force in decision making.”

*Mike Hall, WVU Extension Service
Webster County*

“We have worked collaboratively with all agencies, (state and non-profit), and businesses and consumers to provide quality services for families and children. We work hard not to duplicate service delivery.”

Anonymous, Webster County

“Through state-wide directors or coordinated organizations.”

*Shirley Moran, Retired Sr. Citizens - FRN - Starting Points
Webster County*

“With input from the community such as the Citizen Advisory Council.”

Marla Short - Nicholas County

“Decisions need made at the local level.”

Larry Riffle - Webster County

“Listen to needs by way of local community meetings. Do survey of needs. Continue towards developing programs to move families toward self sufficiency.”

*Anonymous
Webster County*

#1 - How should community decisions about needs feed into government decisions about services?

“Each community is different in the needs they have. Government decisions should be made more with the local people who they affect.”

April Meeks, Pleasants County Committee on Family Issues

“The funding streams that support services already in place are too locked in. We need input from the grass roots at the cabinet level taken seriously.”

Tim Kelly, Reverend, Pastor, Citizen, Parent, Pleasants

“Keep on supporting the Governor’s Cabinet whose mission is to bridge the gap between state government and communities. Keep the community’s voice!”

Anonymous, Harrison County

“By working together.”

Frank Williams, Muster Project, Inc.

Raleigh County

“The community itself is better informed of their needs.”

Deborah Williams, America’s Promise/Raleigh County FRN

“They need to listen to what the local citizens concerns and needs are, they are different from county to county.”

A. Lee Leftwich, Muster Project, Inc.

Raleigh County

“Legislators MUST reach down to local communities at least halfway - FRN’s can provide that local voice.”

Shirley Hall, Monroe County FRN

Monroe County

“They should come from the community level up. The FRN community plan is a good way.”

Karen Larson, Pocahontas County FRN

Pocahontas County

“Uniform community needs assessments that are presented to the legislature on a county by county statewide basis.”

Peggy Rossi, RCACHA-FRC

“I feel the community should be vocal about needs they need within their community. I feel the community is the best source and know what the community needs.”

Maegan Surider, Marshall County FRN

“It should be part of the puzzle.”

Rhonda Stubbs, A Child’s Place, CASA, Ltd.

“Communities can prioritize their needs, and notify their government leaders through family resource networks.”

Michele Baranaskas, Regional FRN

Kanawha County

#1 - How should community decisions about needs feed into government decisions about services?

“Coalition of social service agencies/individualism businesses/religious leaders sharing. Ex: FRNs.”

Helaine Rotgin - Kanawha County

“We need community and family leaders or decision-makers, working together as a statewide decision-making group.”

Michael Tierney, Step by Step - Lincoln County

“Community groups identify needs, identify problems, and identify solutions - feed to government decision makers.”

Anonymous - Kanawha County

“A structure and plan is needed. The FRNs are the effort to provide that structure and plan and should be supported and improved.”

Renate Pore - Kanawha County

“Keep constant contact - keep legislators involved.”

Vic Sprouse, Senate - Kanawha County

“Government leadership needs to rise from community leadership and activity.”

Larry Rowe, State Senate - Kanawha County

“I think they should be fed into government decisions and educate people about family and children.”

Anonymous - Kanawha County

“Decisions should be channeled to an appointed or volunteer collective that will be not only heard but also involved in decision-making about how to meet those needs.”

Carolyn Wesley, Kanawha FRN

“Community decisions as well as government decisions should be based on and driven by the past, present and future needs of services.”

Lolita Joyce-Chews, RFRN

“Government is suppose to serve the people not the budget. People should weigh more in the balance.”

Sandra Burke - Ritchie County

“Government decisions should be based on community needs/decisions.”

Carol F. Mosear, WVPRC

“Need assessments through state representatives, its Governor and cabinet members.”

Everett Leggett, Co-director FRN - Doddridge County

“Town hall meetings, internet forums, through elected representatives.”

Terry Moore - Wood County

#1 - How should community decisions about needs feed into government decisions about services?

“Maintain a current community plan. Insist government consider their local plan before awarding funding.”

Duane Ashcroft, Chairman Wood County FRN

“Need a fact-based system to verify needs and priorities - then funding should follow needs.”

Jane Harrington, Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund

“Open lines of communication back and forth from local community to decision-makers.”

Steve Tuck, Children’s Home Society of West Virginia

Wood County

“Local communities should assess needs and develop a plan that meets those needs as well as unmet needs. From this plan, local and state officials would be able to identify programs that should continue to be funded and to review unmet needs. These unmet needs could be prioritized as state, regional or local services. From this, pilot projects could be initiated at the local level and if the project worked well, it could be implemented statewide. An example of a pilot project that was tested, fine-tuned and then implemented statewide was the Truancy Diversion Program. Due to lack of funding, this program was eliminated. Even though the program has been eliminated, this does not mean that the need has disappeared.”

Stella Moon

Wood County Family Resource Network

“Government decisions should be made after listening to the community and what that community needs. Some communities need more...some community groups work better than others and those that are not productive should be reviewed and revamped as necessary.”

Jenny Bailey - Wood County

“How should community decisions about needs feed into government decisions about services? The majority of Wood County feels that the government does not listen to them according to a WTAP News poll. Forums such as this may help but the next step is to really use the information you get. People living in the community know what their needs are. Head Start works closely with families in the counties and knows the needs of the families.”

Roberta Lyons - Wood County

“Through the FRNs to the Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families.”

Linda Novak - Wood County

“If you think of a community as a large organization, then it becomes clear that planning needs to be a major part of any community. If the community doesn’t know what they need then they’ll have trouble establishing clear goals to meet their own needs now and in the future. It seems like a governing body would be wise to meet with a group of community leaders who meet regularly together to gather information about the strengths and needs of their community. They can help the governing body see what the community needs and help plan how to best meet those needs. In some instances those needs might be met by sharing resources already found within the community. It might not even be known that there are resources that can be utilized if leaders don’t make it a habit to meet regularly about their community.”

Cynthia Curtis - Wood County

#1 - How should community decisions about needs feed into government decisions about services?

“Services rendered should be in line with what the community needs are.”

Kim Gifford - Upshur County

“Families should be able to give input about the services they feel they need. Families need a vehicle to give input to legislators and service providers. FRNs serve as this vehicle. Families seldom will travel great distances to voice their opinions. They need to have a local means of this. Again FRNs serve this purpose.”

Sandy White - Doddridge County

“Block Grant Format: Same format as Federal monies for services being given to State for development/design/implementation of appropriate services.”

Cynthia Barr

Jefferson County

“I believe feed-in is a two step process.

(1) Community needs should feed from a central community needs commission with credibility. This source should not just represent Medicaid eligible client needs but all family/community needs. Many WV working families are left out of services; but, these families are in need and are buckling under the weight of increased family expenses and demands. The source should have members from the community volunteer organizations and religious organizations, who are the backbone of WV society, as well as, elected community leaders. Without a buy-in from the community leadership, the success of a community needs commission will be limited. Some FRNs and Starting Point centers are fulfilling this role; but many are not.

(2) An objective, research based community assessment of needs must be completed. An example of a research based national program, which is partially implemented in WV now, is the 40 Asset Program by Search Institute. This program assesses the community needs of children and then communities can build assets which produce healthy children and families.

Government should finance and monitor accountability of the asset building in communities.

Community need commissions should require a community match for the requested government funds for their projects. This is key for community buy-in and accountability.

A grassroots approach to services facilitates the perception that the government is listening and acting on the people’s behalf. Also, if the community needs commissions are organized so they are not a part of the government, these commissions will be eligible for private grants.”

Loyette Mathias - Grant County

“All community decisions need to be carefully and clearly assessed and taken into full consideration. The government at large needs to have a better understanding of what the needs of different communities around the state are. Actually when one sits in an office in Charleston one can not determine what the needs in say, Mingo or Wirt County are.”

Cathy Reed - Marion County

“Communities know what is best for them and should always be brought to the table when deciding on programs and services.”

Tina Faber - Kanawha County

#1 - How should community decisions about needs feed into government decisions about services?

“There should be local opportunities to identify needs by a cross-section of the community - once identified, the local needs should be funneled to state agencies providing services or providing funding. Those needs should be a major factor in decision-making. One way to emphasize the priority of local needs is to include them in grants.”

Laurie McKeown - Cabell County

“The community is ultimately the individuals who know what it is actually taking place in their community and what changes need to be made. It is important to address these opinions and implement them into the decision-making process of the government. Needs vary from one community to another and although an abundance of needs may arise from the different communities, it becomes very important to bring members from various communities together in order to prioritize the needs.”

Alysha Nichols - Jefferson County

“Open discussion in communities with representations of our government.”

Susan Webster, Mayor, town of Bath

Morgan County

“Each region should have a voice that is heard and acted on individually because we are individual and constantly changing.”

Anonymous - Berkeley County

“Ensure the community has a representative by non-political players.”

Katie Berry - Monongalia County

“From the County Family Issues Taskforces, to the FRN, to the Cabinet. It is that simple, BUT, what is not simple is establishing a helping attitude on all levels. I was an original member of the Eastern Regional FRN, and from the beginning there was a problem with the Cabinet believing that they were the authority, and in charge. Creative and innovative ideas were dismissed while safe, established projects/programs were supported. Community decisions can only be fed into government decisions when the government is willing to listen and willing to support new ideas.”

Gary Butts - Hardy County

“Community needs should be the driving force.”

Lea V. Whetzel

Grant County

“The state should strengthen the FRN process to gather and report community input from families and organizations. As needs are identified and reported, a central office, like the Governor’s Cabinet, could compile them and widely communicate the results and actions to be taken back out to the communities. The central office would work with the legislature, state department leaders and Governor to use the data gathered on the needs to better plan strategies on how services should be delivered. Then implement the strategies at all levels - state, regional, county, community.”

Debra Bowyer

Cabell County

#1 - How should community decisions about needs feed into government decisions about services?

“In order for services to be delivered in a client-centered and effective manner, there must be a clear avenue of communication between government decision-makers and local providers and consumers of services. Individuals, both “front-line” workers and clients typically will not take the time to identify and consider the underlying reasons why service delivery is not always as effective as it could be, let alone have their views with decision-makers. When there is no obvious connection between what they see as a problem and the solution, there is little impetus to make the effort.

Most FRNs provide a regular forum where these individuals can come together and discuss barriers to effective services. They have the potential to serve as a clear avenue of communication between consumers, providers and decision-makers. It seems that their effectiveness has been impeded by the lack of cooperation from the state level decision-makers. By formally acknowledging and promoting FRNs as this tool and designing a consistent process among all FRNs, government decision-makers would have the information they need to create policies that work.”

Amy Pancake - Hampshire County

“Government decisions should be based on needs.”

*Chris Merritt, Region VIII Adolescent Health
Pendleton County*

“By families and service providers working together to assess community needs and strengths, plan, implement and evaluate the effectiveness of services. Local solutions to local problems - with funding, expertise, guidance and assistance from state level.”

George Ann Methany, Tucker County Family Resource Network - Tucker County

“An infrastructure that stems from the Community Assessment Team.”

*Vicki Geary, North Central WV Community Action Association
Marion County*

“Directly reporting to a cabinet level on a routine and well-identified basis.”

*Don Perdue, Delegate 17th House
Wayne County*

“Through the present FRN system. However, there needs to be a practical and effective structure to communicate these decisions. Before this can be accomplished, the local FRN must have recognition by both the local county and the state authorities. For example, from the beginning we have had difficulty having the state and local educational components participate. Unless their membership feels they will be fed by the FRN, they will not see any need to participate.”

*Rev. Richard D. Reece
Hampshire County*

#2 How can citizens, communities and government work together?

“Communicate, which includes listening as well as talking.”
Paula Green, Webster County Economic Development Authority
Webster County

“As is.”
Anonymous,
Webster County

“Through FRNs.”
Estil Hughes, Webster County Republican Ex. Com.
Webster County

“The most effective working together we have seen and can project for the future is through our FRN.”
Terry Lee Webb, Seneca Health Services
Webster County

“They can do this when an atmosphere is created where no one cares who gets the credit.”
Mike Hall, WVU Extension Service
Webster County

“As we did tonight in a collaborative effort.”
Anonymous
Webster County

“More Voices meetings.”
Shirley Moran, retired Sr. Citizens, FRN, Starting Points
Webster County

“Through your FRN and Starting Points.”
Marla Short,
Nicholas County

“The government needs to listen to the needs and concerns of each individual community.”
Larry Riffle
Webster County

“Keep open minds.”
Frankie Boggs, Concerned Citizen

“Information sharing is an important aspect.”
Anonymous
Webster County

#2 - How can citizens, communities and government work together?

“By going to an FRN meeting! Having a roundtable discussion on the needs of their citizens.”

April Meeks, Pleasants County Committee on Family Issues

Pleasants County

“Through the FRN.”

Jim Kelly, Reverend, Pastor, Citizen, Parent

“Keep an outfit, such as the Governor’s Cabinet whose business is to bridge the gap between state government and communities. Keep the communities’ voice!”

Anonymous

Harrison County

“Communication - when government officials are contacted. They should respond to the citizens.”

Marie Lilly, FRN

Raleigh County

“Have government to respond to citizens.”

Ernest Lilly, FRN

“By listening to what we have to say.”

Frank Williams, Muster Project

Raleigh County

“There needs to be open communication and availability of all parties involved.”

Deborah Williams, America’s Promise/Raleigh County FRN

“Better communication with information about available resources, monies and services.”

A. Lee Leftwich, Muster Project, Inc.

“FRNs bring citizens and community representatives to the table - FRNs need a direct connection to Governor’s Cabinet and the Governor to educate them about local communities.”

Shirley Hall, Monroe County FRN

“They could have an annual meeting compiled of all. This could be an opportunity to review county annual reports.”

Karen Larson, Pocahontas County FRN

“Develop relationships with legislators on the local level.”

Peggy Parson, RCACHA - FRC

“By communicating and discussing ideas coming together and discussing ideas and concerns. Educating each other.”

Maegan Surider, Marshall County FRN

“Leave issues at the door and have an open mind.”

Rhonda Stubbs, A Child’s Place, CASA, Ltd.

Brooke and Hancock Counties

#2 - How can citizens, communities and government work together?

“Through Family Resource Networks.”

*Michele Baranaskas, Regional FRN
Boone, Kanawha, Putnam Counties*

“I think government needs to try and educate citizens and communities more on how government works and how they can be more involved. I think citizens are sometimes intimidated by ‘government’ and that barrier needs to be broken.”

*Lara Dunlap, West Virginia Prevention Resource Center
Boone, Kanawha, Clay Counties*

“Example from the past. I headed citizens’ Welfare Advisory Council Area 17 from 1975-1976 and 1979-1980 and we developed what I just realized was just like the FRN Centers - sharing services - different parts of welfare - children - adults, community people, recipients of information...”

*Helaine Rotgin
Kanawha County*

“Sitting at the table together, mutually sharing oversight of programs.”

*Michael Tierney, Step by Step
Lincoln County*

“Continue to strengthen FRNs bringing community voices to issues.”

*Anonymous
Kanawha County*

“Citizens and communities must be encouraged and supported to get involved. This takes a lot of effort.”

*Renate Pore
Kanawha County*

“Discussions like tonight. Regular meetings on the services people need.”

Vic Sprouse, Senate

“Local leadership needs to watch or be reflected in government leadership.”

Larry Rowe, State Senate

“Provide ways for citizen’s voices to be heard in a way that is not intimidating. Through forums, emails, phone calls.”

*Natalie Tenant
Kanawha County*

“By helping more children and adults get what they need from citizens and communities and government working together.”

Anonymous

“When the government remembers that they are only citizens elected BY the people FOR the people.”

Carolyn Wesley, Kanawha FRN

#2 - How can citizens, communities and government work together?

“By coming to the table with an honest desire to bring about POSITIVE change.”

Lolita Joyce-Chews, RFRN

“First, come to the table, second, talk and listen, third, government must listen and respond.”

Sandra Burke

Ritchie County

“Cooperatively under shared values and goals rather than that of special interest groups.”

Carol F. Mosear, WVPRC

“Leave their ego at the door.”

Everett Leggett, Co-director FRN

Doddridge County

“Communication, accessibility - the burden of being a decision-maker is that you must be available to the people - at all levels.”

Terry Moore

Wood County

“Local communities must perform coordinating service.”

Duane Ashcroft

Wood County

“More listening sessions with legislators present - based on ONE issue at any given session.”

Jane Harrington, Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund

“Listening, observing - getting out to meet people.”

Steve Tuck, Children's Home Society of West Virginia

“One way of working together is utilizing the concept of a local planning body such as the Family Resource Networks that have proved to be quite effective in most communities. Community members, agency representatives and business leaders are willing to address local issues when a neutral body such as the FRN is facilitating the process. A neutral body allows individuals to have an equal voice and empowers them to address issues without fear of repercussion by an agency that may attempt to skew the outcome/results of a task team. When task teams are formed by one or more direct service providers or state funded agencies to address an issue, community members believe that, to some extent, the outcome is governed by the agency/provider.”

Stella Moon

Wood County Family Resource Network

“Including all groups within a community is the most effective way to get all aspects of a child's life improved. The education, health, welfare and safety of each WV child is dependent on the community and its people. If all groups are not at the table..i.e. parents, then all voices are not heard.”

Jenny Bailey

Wood County

“People that are appointed are not always aware of needs. People who work with the families see what needs there are in their community.”

Roberta Lyons

Wood County

“It’s always hard to get past individual issues and concerns long enough to see the point of view of others. I firmly believe that all of the above need to have time to meet and have time to express their ideas. Government might ultimately need to make a decision about how to handle an issue but it’s hard to make an intelligent decision without input from many. Government needs to offer opportunities where they listen to the public before just making arbitrary decisions about what problems are and how to handle them. In some communities progress will seem slow at first because everyone has their own agenda. Hopefully, the effort won’t be abandoned because ultimately others will start listening to other points of view and get beyond just what they want to see done for themselves. Every community has schools to run, poor to feed and house, and needs of the elderly to name a few, so it can’t just meet any one of those needs and not the others to one degree or another.”

Cynthia Curtis

Wood County

“Community meetings, committees and collaboration.”

Kim Gifford

Upshur County

“A trust has to be developed between citizens, community and government before open communication can begin. Citizens must feel that they are in a safe environment and that their opinions are valuable before communication and discussions can occur. FRNs serve as a neutral party that can bring groups together in a safe atmosphere for discussion. FRNs have worked very hard to build positive reputations in their community. The community views them as helpful, information rich, as an organization trying to make positive changes, and as an organization that will help families help themselves.”

Sandy White

Doddridge County

“Allow flexibility in guidelines so that the citizens in the communities state what they need, the communities share it with the government and the government funds. The responsibility of the community should be to complete the task to address the need the funding was asked for; not find the fundable need that closely matches the community and then make it fit.”

Cynthia Barr

Jefferson County

“Using an objective assessment of the community can bring objectivity to citizens, communities and government. Each can then address needs with the strengths of their perspective. Each could write a proposal, which must include matching grassroots funding. The result would be that a need could be targeted from many angles. This method reduces turf issues and needs are met.”

Loyette Mathias

Grant County

#2 - How can citizens, communities and government work together?

“We all need to sit down at the table together and if one looks at the model of Family Resource Networks that is what is to happen there and in my county of Marion this happens. Family members like myself, community workers and DHHR, Valley and Health Department folks all have a chance to speak, be heard and actually listened to....”

Cathy Reed - Marion County

“The only way to work together is collaboration, which can be accomplished by a safe meeting ground that will give everyone a voice in the process. Many times, citizens and communities are intimidated by government, and therefore need to be encouraged to participate. It is also important that once that participation is there, the input of the community must be valued and put to use. It will be devastating if the WV Legislature ignores the voice of the community who has strongly sounded out about the extraordinary value the Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families has been in their lives.”

Tina Faber

Kanawha County

“Provide opportunities in local communities for all to come together to identify needs, plan for filling gaps and together search for solutions.”

Laurie McKeown - Cabell County

“Community meetings and continuing the Tadpole communities.”

Anonymous

Berkeley County

“Keep talking, writing.”

Susan Webster, Mayor, town of Bath

Morgan County

“It is very difficult to get everyone to come together at the same time, but community meetings which include legislators, community agency representatives, private citizens and business representatives need to be held more often. They should not just happen after a major problem arises.”

Alysha Nichols

Jefferson County

“Continue use of forums and public hearings across the state to disseminate and gather information.”

Katie Berry

Monongalia County

“Through the existing organization of Task Forces, FRN, and Cabinet with the new Citizen Advisory Committee as the checks and balances unit. Again, the Cabinet and staff should not be allowed to stifle new ideas. It is a matter of a helping attitude throughout the organization. It gets back to the fact that doing the same thing time after time always produces the same outcome. We need to experiment.”

Gary Butts

Hardy County

#2 - How can citizens, communities and government work together?

“By having liaisons that work between programs.”

Lea V. Whetzel - Grant County

“Create processes for citizens to have input in the local and state government. Get the feedback and truly use it by having all three groups - state government, communities and citizens-represented at all levels of state and local planning and problem solving.”

Debra Bowyer - Cabell County

“There is a tremendous disconnect between individuals who make policy and a vast majority of those who are affected by policy. Meaningful and deliberate education and communication would help. However, few individuals, from either side, ever take the necessary initiative. A mechanism that is sanctioned and respected by all sides that can provide the necessary education and foster a meaningful dialogue between all stakeholders would greatly enhance their ability to work together.”

Amy Pancake

Hampshire County

“By listening to each other.”

Chris Merritt, Region VIII Adolescent Health

Pendleton County

“Through a forum - e.g. FRNs where all members have a voice and a vote in the decisions that affect their lives.”

George Ann Methany, Tucker County Family Resource Network

Tucker County

“Through clearly defined goals and expectations (with achieved results required) to eliminate poverty.”

Vicki Geary, North Central WV Community Action Association

Marion County

“By meeting for "round table" sessions on a regular basis. In the round table all the parties participate on an equal basis. The homemaker is afforded as much respect as a judge. Unless we pay attention to one another and really try to listen, folks are not going to participate until they become frustrated or angry. Then it becomes a matter of who can shout their feelings in the most articulate way; a power struggle enjoined to winning, rather than our becoming vulnerable with one another to resolve concerns. In order to have participation, agencies and companies need to afford time off with pay and pay should be offered to the volunteer citizen. Then, what they offer to the city, county or state must be validated by those in power, by paying attention to what they have offered. If they cannot act upon a decision then they must come back to the group and offer dialogue until an adequate resolution is accepted. People need to be treated with dignity.”

Rev. Richard D. Reece

Hampshire County

“Take the lessons from our FRNs and use them not as anecdotes, but rather as a revealed and successful process.”

Don Perdue, Delegate 17th House

Wayne County

#3 What is an efficient way to coordinate programs that meet the needs of children and families?

“Listen to the families receiving services, the service providers, the community of voices expressing the needs.”

Paula Green, Webster County Economic Development Authority

“The current way, through FRN and Starting Points coordinators, has been working most effectively.”

Vicki Hamrick, Webster County B.O.E., FRN Bd. President

“We do.”

Anonymous

Webster County

“Keep the FRNs - this is our way to meet the needs of the children. We work together to figure out where and how to meet the children’s needs.”

Anonymous

Webster County

“Having a coordinator in place that is a neutral entity - not connected to or under the control of any agency.”

Terry Lee Webb, Seneca Health Services/Webster County FRN, founder and current member

“It needs to be independent of a ‘controlling’ agency - it is important to have someone in this role.”

Mike Hall, WVU Extension Service

“Through the FRN and Starting Points programs.”

Anonymous

Webster County

“County meetings to state wide organizations.”

Shirley Moran, retired Sr. Citizens, FRN, Starting Points

“Through your Starting Points Family Resource Center.”

Marla Short,

Nicholas County

“Coordination needs to be kept at the local level and have the community support and local volunteers.”

Larry Riffe

Webster County

“Keep the program as is and work on improving it.”

Frankie Boggs, Concerned Citizen

#3 - What is an efficient way to coordinate programs that meet the needs of children and families?

“Information sharing is an important aspect.”

Anonymous

“Start locally - serve the small people - they need it.”

April Meeks, Pleasants County Committee on Family Issues

“The FRN.”

Tim Kelly, Reverend, Pastor, Citizen, Parent

“Family Resource Networks - local, NEUTRAL, coordination.”

Anonymous - Harrison County

“Through FRN.”

Frank Williams, Muster Project

“Have a representative from FRN to meet with legislative committee.”

A. Lee Leftwich, Muster Project

“This needs a lot of work to make funding available IF you could coordinate programs - too many funding streams and top bosses/power.”

Shirley Hall, Monroe County FRN

“Work through the FRNs.”

Karen Larson, Pocahontas County Family Resource Network

“There needs to be incentive/encouragement for collaboratives on the local level that is communicated down from ALL departments on the state level.”

Peggy Parson, RCACHA - FRC

“By bringing all agencies and even community members together to talk about programs offered and what programs are needed through a ‘neutral’ entity such as FRNs.”

Maegan Surider, Marshall County FRN

“FRNs!”

Rhonda Stubbs, A Child’s Place, CASA, Ltd.

“Through Family Resource Networks.”

Michele Baranaskas, Regional FRN

“I’m not sure of what the best way to coordinate or fund programs, but since I work in different communities I realize that each community has very different needs so we need to find a way to get involved with communities enough to figure out what the individual needs are. FRNs are a great start in finding what different communities need.”

Lara Dunlap, West Virginia Prevention Resource Center

“Get mid-level bureaucrats at state level to explore how to weave program initiatives.”

Michael Tierney, Step by Step

#3 - What is an efficient way to coordinate programs that meet the needs of children and families?

“At community level.”

Anonymous

“Coordination of programs for children and families are difficult as long as almost all state programs are defined by federal funding streams.”

Renate Pore - Kanawha County

“ I believe the Starting Points Centers can be used to coordinate programs. We need to look for the most efficient way to deliver services.”

Vic Sprouse, Senate

“Cabinet was a good model.”

Larry Rowe, State Senate

“Establish a paid staff charged with this responsibility...oh yeah..isn't that what the Governor's Cabinet was?”

Carolyn Wesley, Kanawha FRN

“Have persons who know the true needs of children and families.”

Lolita Joyce - Chews, RFRN

“Bring all to the table to cooperate.”

Sandra Burke

Ritchie County

“Through a coordinating body such as FRNs.”

Carol F. Mosear, WVPRC

“There needs to be a priority established to ensure we get the best effect for our dollar. Regional coordinators can comprise governor's board. Together they determine state priorities.”

Terry Moore

Wood County

“All service providers should be required to file their programs with a coordinator. (local FRN, etc.)”

Duane Ashcroft, Chairman Wood County FRN

“Rework FRNs (e.g. consolidate and/or change staffing patterns) - provide more ways for FRNs to connect to state legislature.”

Jane Harrington, Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund

“A community plan that is comprehensive and broad based and updated and draws out consensus (or at least support).”

Steve Tuck, Children's Home Society of West Virginia

#3 - What is an efficient way to coordinate programs that meet the needs of children and families?

“The FRNs have been successful in coordinating some programs in their local communities. An example would be CHIP Outreach, the Pre-k Plan or the Teaching Quality Initiative. Some programs that are highly regulated and/or involve confidentiality issues such as foster care or mental health patients are more difficult to streamline and coordinate. FRNs have the capability of linking programs or resources so that individuals may benefit from the many resources available to them.”

Stella Moon

Wood County Family Resource Network

“Require programs to meet together regularly with consumers at the table to discuss progress and provide ongoing opportunities for planning.”

Laurie McKeown

Cabell County

“It seems the best way would be to use the programs such as the Family Resource Networks that are already in place. It would be a waste to get rid of something that so many people are already familiar with.”

Tina Faber

Kanawha County

“There needs to be FRNs , Starting Points and the like to help be the umbrella to get things moving and shaking. There has to be place where grants can be worked on and administered.”

Cathy Reed

Marion County

“Community needs commission could be the monitor of this coordination. It can be the central information center for the community. People benefiting from the services/projects could volunteer to answer questions. (Ownership and the understanding that if you benefit from a service you need to pay back something is a value which needs to be emphasized.) Nothing is free.”

Loyette Mathias

Grant County

“Face-to-face contact in the stores/restaurants/ schools/churches with a coordinated internet resource available to each of the outreach people.”

Cynthia Barr

Jefferson County

“First you need input from the families you are serving. If they do not feel the service is a need you are not going to be effective or efficient. It has to be a ground up process, not top down.”

Sandy White

Doddridge County

“Do a community needs assessment and then utilize every possible agency, organization, church, school and/or business to render those programs.”

Kim Gifford

Upshur County

#3 - What is an efficient way to coordinate programs that meet the needs of children and families?

“Identify what programs are available to children and families in the community and try to get leaders of those organizations to start meeting on a regular basis. Find out what resources other communities might have that your community might benefit from. Perhaps the group could work toward gaining those resources for their community or possibly adjusting some of the individual goals within the group to start meeting some additional needs. It’s very easy to stay isolated within your own organization and not be aware that others might be doing the same thing and other needs aren’t being met at all for children and families within the community.”

Cynthia Curtis
Wood County

“Programs should be operated by programs that have been in operation for years. Programs that have seen the effect of change on their communities and the families that live there.”

Roberta Lyons
Wood County

“An efficient way to coordinate programs statewide is obviously a central group such as the Governor’s Cabinet. But that group must do more to oversee the individual counties’ FRNs. Some of the FRNs are very successful and make an impact on the children and families of their respective counties. But those that are not doing the job that the FRNs should be doing should be reorganized and mentored by the successful FRNs and the central group charged with the job of overseeing the success of each FRN. A major problem with some FRNs is the “look what I did!” attitude and that is not the way to get things done effectively.”

Jenny Bailey
Wood County

“By agencies meeting together and coordinating to meet the needs.”

Chris Merritt, Region VIII Adolescent Health
Pendleton County

“Just some quick thoughts...A central coordinating group with some authority to make decisions comprised of individuals who are focused on positive outcomes for children and families and not on which agency gets how much money. The group should:

- have up-to-date on research-based programs;
- have a systematic approach for gathering and incorporating into the decision-making process feedback about program delivery from service staff and service recipients.
- be prepared to make funding/programmatic suggestions/decisions based on outcome.
- be willing to educate legislators about need for funding/policy changes that can positively impact services for children/families.”

Amy Pancake
Hampshire County

“Organizations that provide services to the same target populations need to communicate and plan together to maximum their resources, avoid duplication, and improve the effectiveness of program delivery.”

Debra Bowyer
Cabell County

#3 - What is an efficient way to coordinate programs that meet the needs of children and families?

“I think the controlling factor will be the Citizen’s Advisory Committee, which should maintain a neutral position (as much as possible). Their review of projects/programs should help to support the new ideas, and reject the same old. They are the buffers between the needs and politics.”

Gary Butts - Hardy County

“I feel the initial model of the Governor’s Cabinet is/was an efficient way to coordinate the programs, but that it was not used to it’s fullest potential. It should be revamped and restructured, but kept as an independent body. Structure and policy should be put into place to ensure it’s proper administration and use.”

Katie Berry - Monogalia County

“The first thing we need to do is find out what those needs are in different areas. What the Central Region of the state needs is not going to be the same as what they Eastern Region or Southern Region needs. We have to stop assuming that a program that works in one area is going to work in another.”

Alysha Nichols - Jefferson County

“Senator Unger’s model makes sense to me.”

Susan Webster, Mayor, town of Bath

Morgan County

“Have Starting Points advertise at a new level and funding to increase their services.”

Anonymous - Berkeley County

“Through a collaborative, neutral body - e.g. FRNs - independent of agency regulations/guidelines, income requirements, etc.”

George Ann Methany, Tucker County Family Resource Network

Tucker County

“In a one-stop wraparound service concept. To avoid duplication, competition and confusion to the customer - children and families.”

Vicki Geary, North Central WV Community Action Association

Marion County

“Be proactive - not reactive; preventive.”

Anonymous

“Well, give the local FRN the manpower, funding, and authority to be the conduit from the grass roots to the State. This would mean that local agencies [public, non-profit, and professional] would have

to go through the FRN. Why not the County Commission? Because they are busy with the business [mainly financial] of the county and tend to become defensive in regard to any complaint. They tend to take matters personal. The FRN has the professional staff that has the ability to listen to the people and the experience to advocate effectively for them. This would also mean that those at the state level would have to pay attention and support the various FRNs. I do not believe that the FRN receives the respect they need in order to accomplish what the state would like.”

Rev. Richard D. Reece - Hampshire County

#4 What is an efficient way to fund programs that meet the needs of children and families?

“Using the tax dollars needed with consideration for the block of voting population or tax dollars paid from the community.”

Paula Green, Webster County Development Authority

“Continue to fund the FRN which is an autonomous body with community identity and ownership rather than the bureaucracy.”

Terry Lee Webb, Seneca Health Services - Webster County FRN founder and current member

“Stress the prevention part of solving long term problems.”

Mike Hall, WVU Extension Service

“By a neutral body.”

Anonymous - Webster County

“Give them priority. Grants.”

Shirley Moran, Retired Sr. Citizens - FRN - Starting Points

“Through tax money that we tax payers pay.”

Marla Shot, Nicholas County

“Funding needs to come from a diversified number of sources including federal, state and private grants, etc.”

Larry Riffle - Webster County

“Continue current efforts through structural state organizations, job services, DHHR, mental health, rural health centers, provide funding for counties most in need.”

Anonymous - Webster County

“Through the collaborative efforts of your local FRN.”

April Meeks, Pleasants County Committee on Family Issues

“Through an independent organization that doesn't worry about mid-level provider's quotas and federal agendas but rather the people and the children.”

Tim Kelly, Reverend, Pastor, Citizen, Parent

“Look more to blended funding.”

Anonymous

Webster County

“On behalf of Head Start, I think all children should be given the same opportunity to attend instead of choosing the children of low income.”

Marie Lilly, FRN

Raleigh County

#4 - What is an efficient way to fund programs that meet the needs of children and families?

“I think all children should be treated equally. I don’t think a child should be refused, because of finances.”

*Ernest P. Lilly, FRN
Raleigh County*

“By doing it on a regular basis.”

Frank Williams, Muster Project

“Continue funding for Starting Points and FRNs as it has been in the past.”

Doris Hall, CASE of WV Starting Points/FRC

“To ensure accountability of services not numbers!”

A. Lee Leftwich, Muster Project

“Local counties should have a flex fund pot to provide for unmet needs in the community - we have a wonderful working flex fund.”

Shirley Hall, Monroe County FRN

“The FRNs are a good way to leverage funds and identify where services are needed.”

Karen Larson, Pocahontas County Family Resource Network

“Recognize the value of para professional community based programs which are supremely cost effective and can be more effective than more costly, professionally staffed or Medicaid funded service.”

Peggy Rossi, RCACHA - FRC

“Making sure there isn’t a duplication of services to reach out to more community members and place funds into another program that betters our communities.”

Maegan Surider, Marshall County FRN

“With an incentive to collaborate.”

Rhonda Stubbs, A Child’s Place, CASA, Ltd.

“Base it on need rather than politics.”

*Michele Baranaskas, Regional FRN
Boone, Kanawha, Putnam Counties*

“Find a way to get involved with communities enough to figure out what the individual needs are. FRNs are a great start in finding what different communities need.”

Lara Dunlap, West Virginia Prevention Resource Center

“Dedicated funding source such as tobacco.”

Vic Sprouse, Senate

“Fund a percentage of programs at community level vs. state run programs (old bloc grant idea?) at least we need to balance control of programs on state vs. community levels.”

Larry Rowe, State Senate

#4 - What is an efficient way to fund programs that meet the needs of children and families?

“By giving them more help.”

Anonymous - Kanawha County

“A base level for money and maybe grant funds.”

Everett Leggett, Co-director FRN

Doddridge County

“Create goals, provide consolidated funding, evaluate achievement - don’t fragment funds to create so many programs that the focus is lost and the support fragmented and watered down.”

Terry Moore

Wood County

“Better management of funding.”

Duane Ashcroft, Chairman Wood County FRN

“Evaluate, evaluate, evaluate!!!! Don’t just hand out money because a program or group exists or effects it.”

Jane Harrington, Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund

“Is there an efficient way to fund programs for children and families when there are numerous funding streams that are distributed to many state agencies? The answer is probably not unless there is a major systemic change at the state level. Unlike local agencies that may be forced to work together to meet local needs, state agencies are reluctant to blend funds or resources to better benefit children and families. While the funds may never leave a local agency, local agencies may agree to be responsible for providing funding for a project, or human resources, or materials, etc. so that an unmet need is addressed. If state agencies would set the example instead of giving lip service to the concept of collaborating, coordinating and networking, better services would be provided at the local level. No doubt there would be increased collaboration at the local level based on the trickle down theory of following the example set by their state agency.”

Stella Moon

Wood County Family Resource Network

“Grants are a way to fund programs but I don’t necessarily feel that that is the most efficient way to fund a program. If the Governor’s Cabinet would be given a proper budget and the expertise to see that the funding is properly utilized by the constituent organizations, I think this would help meet the needs of children and families.”

Jenny Bailey

Wood County

“Funds should be sent to Head Start programs. The best way to help our children is to start teaching them while they are young and the window of opportunity for learning is open. Children in Head Start have a safe place to learn and grow. Families benefit by being asked to attend meetings, volunteer and support their child’s learning efforts. Workers visit the homes of the families to help with needs and crisis. There are just not enough funds to complete the projects that they can begin.”

Roberta Lyons

Wood County

#4 - What is an efficient way to fund programs that meet the needs of children and families?

“Since there will never be just one funding source for children and families, I’m not sure that true efficiency is possible. However, it is important to know who gives money for what. Hopefully a community can identify duplication of resources and try to get some of those resources to commit to other needs within the community.”

Cynthia Curtis
Wood County

“Grants funded from local, state and national entities.”

Kim Gifford
Upshur County

“Let the decision be made locally as to how the funds are spent. Each county, city, town and community need is different. A one size fits all will not work.”

Sandy White
Doddridge County

“Per capita like the schools with the ability to supplement with other funds.”

Cynthia Barr
Jefferson County

“Written proposals with matching community funds or assets.”

Loyette Mathias - Grant County

“When you are working hand in hand with other organizations then duplication of services will be a thing of the past.”

Cathy Reed - Marion County

“Require documentation of participation by agency receiving funds in community planning process - require documentation of needs that are being met. Ensure a timely and efficient process for both the Request for Proposals and for the grant-making (ie, timely payments and efficient reporting forms).”

Laurie McKeown
Cabell County

“Coordination of services - do not duplicate them.”

Chris Merritt, Region VIII Adolescent Health
Pendleton County

“Open channels of communication with results - citizens/communities need to know that they will not only be heard, but also listened to. They will not bother to identify problems if there is no clear mechanism for communicating these problems to those who have the power to correct them, or if there is no indication that once communicated, anything will be done. Government decision-makers need a clear mechanism for hearing from a consensus of individuals what needs to be fixed. They also need to use this channel to communicate back to local communities that they hear and understand the issues and are working to solve them.”

Amy Pancake
Hampshire County

#4 - What is an efficient way to fund programs that meet the needs of children and families?

“Assess spending to find areas of inefficiency and redirect resources to those areas identified, as priority needs. Be supportive and invest funds into effective programs that are able to multiply their efforts by leveraging their time and resources to bring in more resources.”

Debra Bowyer - Cabell County

“School-based health services as well as mental health services.”

Lea V. Whetzel - Grant County

“Only fund creative and innovative projects. DO not use funds to support existing programs unless there are surplus funds. As a long-term member of an FRN, I find it interesting that members really don’t want to think outside the box. I view the Cabinet and the local FRN job as finding the money to experiment. This would include actually writing grants, or whatever it takes to fund the projects.”

Katie Berry - Monongalia County

“At this point in time, is there really an efficient way?”

Alysha Nichols - Jefferson County

“Combine programs.”

Susan Webster, Mayor, town of Bath - Morgan County

“Entrusting these with the true heart of help the community, not with people that are just after a position or paycheck.”

Anonymous - Berkeley County

“Focus on prevention, support and early intervention across the board for ALL families first - to reduce the need for more costly treatment services.”

George Ann Methany, Tucker County Family Resource Network - Tucker County

“Do not create another infrastructure! Form a partnership with an existing agency that’s serving low-income individuals in every county = CAA.”

Vicki Geary, North Central WV Community Action Association

Marion County

“There are a variety of concerns to meet the needs of families and children. Some are legal, some have to do with community health, individual medical, transportation, and on and on. Therefore, from the state level the monies need to be coded as to what department they are originating from so they can make it through to the appropriate local agency. For instance, if a family has difficulty in traveling from their home to school, doctor, store, etc. so that their needs are not being met, the highway department funds need to be made available to the local department and the local FRN would need to know that the funds are indeed available and have arrived locally.

Then the staff of the FRN can begin meeting the family's needs. Of course this is an oversimplification. Another way would be that all departments [police, school, highway, health, court, etc]. meet together to develop a budget to submit to their respective state departments. The FRN staff would coordinate this effort. The staff would present to the group the needs of families and the group would discuss the various ways that each could share in meeting these needs.”

Rev. Richard D. Reece - Hampshire County

#5 What tools do citizens, communities and government need to work together?

“Issues need to be clearly presented - this may take a paid advertisement, a forum established for the public to comment on the issue.”

*Terry Moore
Wood County*

“Empower the Family Resource Network - sign off on all grants.”
Duane Ashcroft, Chairman Wood County FRN

“Better communication of these forum opportunities; issue focused meetings coordinated around an issue - media, citizens, etc.”
Jane Harrington, Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund

“Good facilitation of community dialogues.”
Steve Tuck, Children’s Home Society of West Virginia

“Meeting on a 3 month basis.”
Frank Williams, Muster Project

“Open dialogue.”
A Lee Leftwich, Muster Project

“Neutral table and flexible funding.”
Shirley Hall, Monroe County FRN

“A chain of communication. A way to ensure that there is a grassroots/seed money to keep community work alive.”
Karen Larson, Pocahontas County Family Resource Networks

“Availability of facilitation and mediation services to support collaboration and conflict resolution on the local level.”
Peggy Parson, RCACHA - FRC

“A forum.”
Rhonda Stevens, A Child’s Place, CASA, Ltd.

“The tools are already there, the problem is seeing what is needed to be used effectively. Our children are our biggest asset and should be last on the list for fund cutting.”
Paula Green, Webster County Economic Development Authority

“Each other.”
*Anonymous
Webster County*

#5 - What tools do citizens, communities and government need to work together?

“We continue to need an autonomous body within which all citizens have a voice - and all communities even small, communities as ours, have a voice and can remain participatory with governments.”

Terry Lee Webb, Seneca Health Services- Webster County FRN, founder and current member.

“The programs in Webster County are working - give them back their funding and let them do their job.”

Anonymous

Webster County

“An independent council/format in which to meet and share ideas, resources and commitments.”

Mike Hall, WVU Extension Service

“A shared vision as Webster County has now”.

Anonymous

Webster County

“Talk!”

Shirley Moran, Retired Sr. Citizens - FRN - Starting Points

“Local input, community involvement and local leadership.”

Marla Short

Nicholas County

“Clear communication.”

Frankie Boggs, Concerned citizen

“Common vision to help children and families in communities.”

Anonymous

Webster County

“The tools of everyone who will provide the services - and of the people who will receive the services.”

April Meeks, Pleasants County Committee on Family Issues.

“True needs assessments - the empowerment of local citizens and local organizations to apply funding stream money to the actual problems.”

Tim Kelly, Reverend, Pastor, Citizen, Parent

“Family leadership, top effective leadership - a leader who gets it! - who understands and supports community and state partnerships.”

Anonymous

Harrison County

“A neutral collaborative facilitating body that can bring them all together, help them prioritize goals and mobilize them. In other words, an FRN!”

Michele Baranaskas, Regional FRN

#5 - What tools do citizens, communities and government need to work together?

“FRNs and other organizations to serve as a middle ground.”

Lara Dunlap, West Virginia Prevention Resource Center

“Funds to cover the costs of family input, (childcare, transportation, etc.)”

Michael Tierney, Step by Step

“A local based structure like FRNs and responsiveness at the state level.”

Anonymous - Kanawha County

“Education, information structured opportunities, deliberative forums (like this one).”

Renate Pore - Kanawha County

“Any communication tool could help - but not a great need for ‘tools’. Simple dialogue can work best.”

Vic Sprouse, Senate

“Meetings, listening projects; value on change and new ideas.”

Larry Rowe, State Senate

“Open communication lines, convenient place to receive and give information like Starting Point Centers and Community Centers and even mom and pop stores in the rural parts of the county.”

Natalie Tenant - Kanawha County

“To help children and families out of their problems.”

Anonymous

Kanawha County

“A collaborative body where all are equal at the working table - an FRN.”

Carolyn Wesley

Kanawha County

“Desire and commitment.”

Lolita Joyce - Chews, RFRN

“Shared values and goals.”

Carol F. Mosear, WVPRC

“Good guidelines, freedom of determining what is needed at the local level.”

Everett Leggett, Co-director FRN - Doddridge County

“Communities need a neutral planning body that is responsible for planning and coordination of local programs and addressing unmet needs. The community would determine the merits of implementing programs based on the Community Plan. While local communities develop programs, most programs are initiated at the state or federal level. A state association (agency or organization) is needed to coordinate state and local initiatives. Ideally, this is the role of the local FRNs and the Governors Cabinet on Children and Families.”

Stella Moon, Wood County Family Resource Network

#5 - What tools do citizens, communities and government need to work together?

“Pots of money that need to be spent collaboratively. Technical assistance on building successful collaboratives. Regular opportunities to come together and engage in true dialog.”

Laurie McKeown
Cabell County

“A sense of trust. A separate entity from the government that caters to families.”

Tina Faber
Kanawha County

“Equal Respect, a passion for helping children and families, to come to the table and listen to each other.”

Cathy Reed
Marion County

“Leadership development seminars, such as the volunteer leadership seminar held this summer in Charleston, should teach skills such as how government works, grant writing, facilitating meetings, conducting surveys, etc. The more people with leadership skills, the more workers a community will have. Teens should participate. Promotion of the community needs commission must be provided. Communities must be aware of the commissions and how they work. Reporting to the community via newspapers, etc. is essential.”

Loyette Mathias
Grant County

“Flexibility to respond quickly.”

Cynthia Barr
Jefferson County

“A vehicle to bring the groups together in a non-threatening way for discussions to occur. Training for citizens on how to be effective in voicing their opinions and how to make changes occur. Trust among the three that their time and energy in discussions will result in positive change.”

Sandy White
Doddridge County

“Opportunities to meet and listen to each other in a non threatening environment. Be aware that all members in a community might not be proficient readers so utilize more than just the written word to communicate information. All sides need to feel that they can trust each other and have faith that people will do what they say they will. That takes time to build such a relationship and can be easily broken if people lose faith that people are reliable.”

Cynthia Curtis
Wood County

“The people that receive these services should have a voice in what they receive. Most programs decide what services they will make available based on money and manpower. This is not always what the citizens need. Not just the lower income citizens but working poor that need access to daycare and a learning environment for their children. The only tools needed is the funding and freedom for established programs to really work with all the families in their communities.”

Roberta Lyons
Wood County

#5 - What tools do citizens, communities and government need to work together?

“The tools that are needed for these groups to work together are first and foremost, people with the skills to bring all to the table and work cooperatively with all groups.”

Jenny Bailey
Wood County

“Education and communication.”

Kim Gifford
Upshur County

“Better look at the needs - better vehicles to hear our continuing progress and ever-changing needs. More Delegate and Senate discussions.”

Anonymous
Berkeley County

“I think the FRNs are capable of doing this.”

Chris Merritt, Region VIII Adolescent Health
Pendleton County

“Learn from other state’s best practices and how their strategies and models could work in WV. Also, sharing of strategies and best practices that are working in WV. This could be done through a central database, website, community bulletin board, and leaders from successful initiative doing training and technical assistance.”

Debra Bowyer
Cabell County

“Money and time.”

Lea V. Whetzel - Grant County

“A ‘helping attitude.’ Of course training from top to bottom in regards to the objectives of the organization. The expectation of projects being new and innovative needs to be clear to all parties.”

Gary Butts
Hardy County

“Open communication and collaboration.”

Katie Berry - Monongalia County

“There needs to be more regional support offices that can head up bringing various communities together and prioritize the needs and relay that information back up to the main cabinet.”

Alysha Nichols
Jefferson County

“Effective communication skills written as well as spoken - and vehicles to make it meaningful and consistently possible/leadership skills for families as well as service providers; reliable information about family and children’s issues - resources, resources, resources!”

George Ann Methany, Tucker County Family Resource Network
Tucker County

#5 - What tools do citizens, communities and government need to work together?

“Clear defined direction.”

*Vicki Geary, North Central WV Community Action Association
Marion County*

“Need to communicate.”

Anonymous

“To establish the infrastructure through which everyone can speak and be heard. The authority must show respect to folks and treat them with dignity. And the authority must treat their own staffs with the same respect and dignity that they hope the staff is able to show. Perhaps a county ombudsman type of person is necessary. That person comes to the table to listen. To listen to why the agency cannot meet the need that the family has expressed, and then lead the community as a whole to a resolution.”

*Rev. Richard D. Reece
Hampshire County*

#6 Do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to share with your legislators?

“Too much educator focus is on transportation. Legislators should consider permitting contract busses to allow school boards to focus on education.”

*Terry Moore
Wood County*

“We should study all services by a neutral group.”

Duane Ashcroft, Chairman Wood County FRN

“Please try to legislate based on the verified needs of children and families, not political considerations.”

Jane Harrington, Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund

“Keep up the listening and attending community meetings.”

Steve Tuck, Children’s Home Society of West Virginia

“Just listen to what we have to say.”

Frank Williams, Muster Project

“Direct service providers need FRNs to help fund their needs for our entire community. Their existence is neutral and effective in our community. The focus should not be on what saves money, but how to help families! West Virginia needs to provide funding for prevention! This is your Starting Points Family Resource Center!

Doris Hall, CASE of WV Starting Points/FRC

“To look at each county and not across the whole state to have flexibility.”

A Lee Leftwich, Muster Project

“Educate yourselves about what FRNs are doing in each county by directly communicating with them - lots of wonderful things are happening but having to go through this process is frustrating.”

Shirley Hall, Monroe County FRN

“We are making ‘PROGRESS’ in our community! Prevention efforts are growing. Citizens/ Volunteers are giving their time to make a difference. Please find out more about us.”

Karen Larson, Pocahontas County Family resource Network

“We need to learn from the communities where the FRN has become a dynamic pro-active driving force and find meaningful ways to hold the Governor’s Cabinet. We must hold FRNs and direct service projects accountable.”

Peggy Rossi, RCACHA - FRC

“Please continue to communicate and discuss problems with community members. Let them educate you and you educate them.”

Maegan Surider, Marshal County FRN

#6 - Do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to share with your legislators?

“Thanks for all you do keep up the good work, try not to be discouraged. Don’t mess with what is working.”

Paula Green, Webster County Economic Development Authority

“Thank you so far!”

Anonymous - Webster County

“If FRN was under DHHR jurisdiction, would the FRN person be responsible to help DHHR issues and possibly let the community issues decrease? And not be as effective or successful?”

Anonymous - Webster County

“PLEASE continue to fund the Governor’s Cabinet on Family and Children so that we continue to be able to do what we need to do in our FRN - and PLEASE restore the funds for technical assistance to the Cabinet.”

Terry Lee Webb, Seneca Health Services/Webster County FRN, founder and current member

“It’s pretty bad when the only way our state can see to support children/family programs is through gambling. Statistics show this will only increase the need for more programs for children.”

Anonymous - Webster County

“FRN concept is important. It makes a difference in this community. People/agencies/organizations work together and understand each other better by participating in the FRN process.”

Mike Hall, WVU Extension Service

“Yes, it would be devastating to this county to not fund their program.”

Anonymous - Webster County

“The needs of children and families are URGENT!”

Shirley Moran, Retired Sr. Citizens - FRN - Starting Points

“The families served by Starting Points and FRNs that work in communities are working class families that vote, that volunteer and raise money at Starting Points sites for their community.”

Marla Short - Nicholas County

“Webster County cannot afford to lose our individuality, community support, volunteers, etc. which will happen if Starting Points and FRN go under DHHR.”

Larry Riffle - Webster County

“Support FRNs. Motivate those that do not do well/ require corrective action. PRAISE and support those that do well. Provide additional support for rural counties.”

Anonymous - Webster County

“From what I heard tonight - FRNs are of a great importance to their individual communities, They provide so much work (collaboration) that no one else can do.”

April Meeks, Pleasants County Committee on Family Issues

#6 - Do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to share with your legislators?

“The FRN could be the biggest bang for the buck the state has ever had. And it could be on the verge of making its biggest mistake by eliminating the FRN.”

Tim Kelly, reverend, Pastor, Citizen, Parent

“I agree that the Cabinet proper didn’t operate as it was supposed to. If there was ownership by Cabinet members, it might have been more successful. Another thought: Neutrality is extremely important - the MOST important.”

Michele Baranaskas, Regional FRN

“Please restore the Cabinet.”

Lolita Joyce-Chews, RFRN

“Homeschool parents should submit to psychological evaluation to see if legally sane.”

Sandra Burke - Ritchie County

“Keep an open mind. Obtain factual information.”

Everett Leggett, Co-director FRN - Doddridge County

“Since the inception of the Governor’s Cabinet in 1990, no governor has fully utilized the ability of the Governor’s Cabinet to bring about systemic change and to better coordinate the delivery of services to the local community. The Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families and its Family Resource Networks achieved limited success in this area without the support of the Governor’s Cabinet. Most people confuse the Governor’s Cabinet (the Governor’s Secretaries and State Superintendent of Schools) with the Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families. The Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families should be renamed (West Virginia’s Cabinet on Children and Families is one possible name) so that it is not linked to the Governor’s Office and his appointees but is viewed as a neutral entity that serves as the State’s planning and coordinating body. A neutral board or commission that is comprised of state agency representatives, community and family members, business leaders and elected officials should oversee this entity.”

Stella Moon, Wood County Family Resource Network

“From my involvement in a statewide organization, I have seen several of the FRNs in action and the Monongalia FRN seems to have it all together. There may be others but that is yet to be seen. In my dealings with people who have served on the Governor’s Cabinet, the biggest complaint was that the Cabinet tended to spin their wheels and didn’t get much accomplished. Maybe someone needs to take the reins and develop expectations for the Cabinet to be more effective in the future. The Governor’s Cabinet should not be disbanded but reorganized.”

Jenny Bailey - Wood County

“I have worked with people on the FRN. They did not appear to be using funds to make changes in communities. The only real social service I witnessed was access to a resource book but this does little for a family without transportation to get to the service or a phone or the confidence to make a call to set up the appointment. I think we have a very good program already in place we just need to make it possible for them to do more. Head Start has been working for their communities for over 30 years. Make it possible for them to do more.”

Roberta Lyons - Wood County

#6 - Do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to share with your legislators?

“In answer to all of the above questions, it was very disturbing to see the dismantling of the Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families. I believe they made possible a step forward for WV children with many of the initiatives they sponsored and created. What happened to make children and families less important?”

Linda Novak - Wood County

“I’m a great believer in organizations collaborating together but also realize that getting people together is often easier said than done. It’s also difficult to get people to take the time to meet with others. It’s often the very person with the most needs who doesn’t participate in such efforts. Guess there isn’t an easy solution but the isolation of organizations within a community will do even less toward building a strong community.”

Cynthia Curtis - Wood County

“FRNs have made a lot of positive changes in their communities. If they are allowed to be changed, moved, or dissolved all the work they have done to bring about trust and sharing of information and resources will be lost. The individual attitudes about local, state, and federal government are negative, pessimistic, and dismal. This can be seen by the numbers of voter turn out. FRNs have begun to make changes in these attitudes as well. People are beginning to feel that their voice does count and that they can make a difference. But, if the one effective means of making positive changes in the community is taken away, the attitudes will turn even bleaker than before.”

Sandy White

Doddridge County

“The strength of the Starting Points Centers has been their ability to respond to identified community needs. It is important that maintain their ability to be unique and that they are able to provide service delivery if they are the best entity to do so.”

Cynthia Barr

Jefferson County

“My perception of government services is Medicaid and welfare only. The middle class of WV must receive service benefits for their families. Communities’ needs are different in each area of WV. Services must reflect the local residents - not be a cookie cutter service which will be meaningless. People, who benefit from services, must return time or talent to the service. People then do not take for granted what they receive and pride and ownership is associated with the service.

Outcomes: The more leaders in a community and the increase in grassroots service projects, the more engaged the people in the community are. A shared responsibility for the community is developed. The more engaged the people are in their community, a higher interest in voting will occur. This will happen because engaged people will know their participation makes a difference and, therefore, their vote will make a difference. People vote if they believe they make a difference.”

Loyette Mathias - Grant County

#6 - Do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to share with your legislators?

“Families need to have a voice and the FRNs need to not be under DHHR. The wheel is not broken so why change it...? Hopefully what has been said at the forums will make a difference. Also the fact that family members have attended to the interims. HCR47 needs to retain FRNs where they are.”

Cathy Reed - Marion County

“The Governor’s Cabinet has been instrumental in highlighting the importance of (1) prevention/ family support services; (2) involving consumers in a meaningful way; (3) quality and effective early care and education programs; and (4) local collaborative planning. I would hope to maintain those priorities in whatever structure comes next.”

Laurie McKeown - Cabell County

“Thank you for listening, you are welcome to visit our center. There are definite needs with our future generation.”

Anonymous - Berkeley County

“A lot of work has gone into building FRNs - don’t dismantle them.”

Chris Merritt, Region VIII Adolescent Health

Pendleton County

“We need better coordination of services. We as school leaders are not especially knowledgeable about what services are available or what protocol to follow to obtain services.”

Lea V. Whetzel - Grant County

“It is clear to me that to continue doing the same thing from year to year just doesn’t do much to solve the new problems of West Virginians. And, when one part of WV finds a solution, that solution is not communicated to the rest of us. In addition, when programs fail we didn’t want to admit that fact, and these programs continue to eat up what funds are available. These issues seemed to be something that required directions from day one. We have felt our way through the last 10 years, we should know enough at this point to make these services work.”

Gary Butts - Hardy County

“The independence from government controlled social services is one of the factors of the Governor’s Cabinet programming that families and other service providers treasure the most. It is imperative that this remains as part of the restructuring process.”

Katie Berry - Monongalia County

“Please make your decision in the interest of what is best for children and families in WV - not what seems to be the most efficient way to balance the budget!

George Ann Methany, Tucker County Family Resource Network

Tucker County

“Be aware of how we can utilize state and federal dollars.”

Vicki Geary, North Central WV Community Action Association

Marion County

#6 - Do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to share with your legislators?

“Local FRNs are addressing needs of children and families in their communities which enables the families to be empowered and children to become self-reliant.”

Anonymous

“There is no substitute for hope. As much as anything else this is what FRNs and other community based initiatives bring.”

Don Perdue, Delegate 17th House - Wayne County

“Yes. I am sorry that I could not make the meetings as to have dialogue and to be able to articulate some of this would have been much better than sitting here with a keyboard. However, I celebrate the effort made in making all of this possible.

As I recall, for Hampshire, Mineral, Hardy, Grant and Pendleton the FRN concept was brought to our group who were meeting once a month at the Burlington campus. We met to discuss families of youth who were ‘at risk’. When I first heard of this concept I thought Hallelujah, we can finally get some needs met by this group. It would have clout and it would also work with the healthy families to keep them healthy. There could be a ‘one stop shopping’ for families who need help. There was much excitement. I recall a governor’s wife coming in a helicopter. Then it fizzled. I believe it fizzled because it did not have any clout nor adequate funding.

Most of the members of boards who were at first excited and energetic soon lost interest when they ran into the disinterest of certain departments and the State as well. And of course, there was soon another governor and the handing out of jobs to new people with new ideas, etc., etc., etc. We get caught up in our own egos and forget the people and the land. Amen!”

Rev. Richard D. Reece - Hampshire County

To The Legislative Committee:

I am a 55 year old male crippled by an industrial accident while employed by the an employer in Marietta, Ohio. I received serious spinal injuries from the accident while on the job performing work in violation of OSHA regulations. I get absolutely no medical assistance or any form of income from Ohio Workers Compensation. Due to the current State guidelines and regulations written by the Legislature in the State Plan to administer the Medicaid Program and the Governor’s Programs, legal genocide is the main emphasis of these programs. Because of the false lie being purported by the Legislature and the Governor for this medical assistance many West Virginia citizens are denied medical assistance because this State and the Governor’s office play games by deliberately lowering the Federal Poverty levels that would make them eligible to such assistance. This is done under the blatant lie that EVERYTHING costs less in West Virginia because we are a 10th ranked State on a scale of 1 to 5 and the poverty in this State and the low wages allowed by the Legislature to Absentee employers, who don’t even pay their rightful taxes and are protected by the corruption in the State Government at all levels by the lie: “If we make them pay we will cost West Virginians jobs.” There is a constant budget shortage problem for any beneficial spending of taxpayers dollars for their benefit. This lie is constantly used but refused discussion when Legislative and bureaucratic pay raises are voted on. We the citizens of West Virginia are as fed up as California with the lies, malfeasance and corruption as they are. Discussions no going on around this State are very serious about the 2004 election and the human filth running for office and the lies and useless campaign rhetoric no being spread like the substance we shovel off our barn floors. Our common sense and intelligence have been attacked one time too many by the Al Capones, Saddam Husseins and Enron Executives being

#6 - Do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to share with your legislators?

elective by the good old boy system in this State. The Current statements under consideration are nothing more than garbage to be investigated. The Legislature to be honest and truthful in this investigation should be ding their investigation on the number of needing persons who have been refused medical care and assistance, the rip-off corrupt theft of price gouging by medical and drug companies, the same and also refusals to supply medications to terminally medical diagnosed conditions because of the regulatory guidelines they (The Legislature) have promulgated to deny the medical assistance they claim their legislation is supposed to give. We citizens are not ignorant, we can read and understand WHAT we read, including the double talk and lies written into legislation that the news media spins to us telling us how these lying human filth have done something to help us. The Legislative actions are just the same as Senator Ted Kennedy, who sat on Nationwide TV and lied to the American public telling us that things take time and can't be done over night while the legislation he supported will no take affect until 2006 and then will only assist those citizens with an income of \$80,000 or more per year. After a lengthy discussion of this lie with Senator Jay Rockefeller who was against this bill, He voted no against this lie but Robert C. (The liar and disgrace of West Virginia Senator) voted for this lie and helped past this bill in Congress. It would be advisable for this organization to begin to speak out to the citizens of this State those elected liars from all counties including those for Wood County with the exception of Tom Azinger who does honestly try to listen and assist his voting constituents.

*Sincerely,
Preston Rader Vienna, WV*

Note: I cannot attend the program meeting due to complications with the crippling effect of my injuries which is compounded now by the onset of Multiple Sclerosis for which I am refused medication by these same regulatory state guidelines and the WV State Plan to Administer the Federal Medicaid Program.

As an Outreach Coordinator for a Federally Qualified Health Center in rural West Virginia, I can attest to the fact that our local Family Resource Network is the only entity capable of bringing together this county's disparate and sometimes contentious groups and agencies for the benefit of our underserved community. Factionalism and territoriality are deeply rooted and seemingly insurmountable, but time and again FRN has mobilized awareness of and support for issues that are undisputed priorities for our residents, particularly for families of the working poor. Without the FRN as a forum for community input and collaboration, I can honestly say I do not know what we would do. I strongly support the continuation of the Family Resource Networks, particularly in rural underserved communities such as Calhoun County.

*Mariko Hewitt
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Hello, My name is Carol Duke. I am a parent educator for the Parents as Teachers program in Hancock County. Until recently we were working under Change Inc. (a community action agency) in Weirton, WV. I was very disappointed in the lack of help we received while working

#6 - Do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to share with your legislators?

under Change. When I would refer a family to them they would be told they didn't do that and I must not know what I was talking about. To me this was a very poor way of handling it, they didn't give them any idea of where they could go or what they could do.. When I ask for an idea of just what exactly they did, I never got an answer. Finally when my families would call I would just get out my phone book and start calling places to get them help. We live in a very poor area, jobs are not easy to find and when my parents would find a job they didn't have transportation. The bus that CHANGE runs is not an option for most of my families because they don't a car to get down into town where the bus can pick them up. We are now with the Brooke Hancock FRN in Weirton. In the month that we have been with them we have already received more help then we did the year we were with CHANGE. When we ask for help they do not hesitate they help in any way they can. My families have never been turned away. A lot of my families have very little self esteem, it's very easy to make them feel left out or left behind. I have some parents that love when I read books because they, themselves, can not read. I've seen some that can't wait to do the crafts with their children and, for the first time ,actually communicate with them. Most of my parents were not taught simple parenting skills. By going into the home and teaching these simple things and letting them know that someone cares a cycle that has gone on for generations is being broken. If we lose are FRN or they are forced to go under the community action agencies I feel that a lot of good that has taken place will be destroyed. My families look to us for help and most of all understanding. When we turn them away we are telling them we don't care.

Thank you for letting me voice my opinion in this matter, it is a good example of how working together can help.

Thank You

Carol Duke

The Taylor County Family Resource Network brought a sense of power to community that I had never experienced in my lifetime of a half-century. It gave the community an opportunity to determine the needs of families in the county and determine the best manner to address the needs. The grants were small, but they provided start-up money to begin meeting the needs of children and families. Persons in the community were willing to volunteer, knowing that their efforts would be reinforced with funds to continue projects for periods of time. An attitude of hope for the future was reintroduced to our small community after decades of economic decline from the loss of the Manhattan Shirt Factory, glass factories, the mines and the devastating loss of the railroad dispatch center in the 1980's. Despite the disbanding of the FRN in Taylor County, social agencies are still attempting to coordinate efforts to help families, but have no formal meeting nor funding to coordinate the interagency.

A Trades Committee is hoping to restore some of the buildings in the downtown area as trades are taught to persons who will come to learn the trades before skilled craftsmen are gone forever. The Arts Council and Historical Society are also very active. These organizations witnessed what could be accomplished with an organizational structure and the funding the FRN received yearly to coordinate and establish needed services. The funding of FRNs had a far-reaching effect on communities and I propose that continuing to fund FRNs is one of the best ways to ensure communities help their own children and families.

Cynthia Steenstra

#6 - Do you have any other thoughts or ideas you would like to share with your legislators?

I think it would be a very bad move if the Family Resource Network in this county was eliminated. Our Network does a lot for the community and for working and low income families. The Back to School Bash is always a big boost for the community, as we are a very poor county. I have talked to several families whose kids wouldn't have the adequate school supplies if it weren't for this project. Family Resource Network also does a lot of good for our community, as does the Right from the Start program. Both organizations really help our county, and I'd hate to see them dissolved. They would surely be missed.

Just wanted you to know my opinion, that goes along with many others. I think there must surely be other programs that would be missed a lot less, than these two.

Sincerely

Linda Andrews

Starting Points strengthens the effectiveness of other community-based groups and local agencies through referral and direct physical support to these already strapped agencies - Starting Points family resource centers are the "point of entry" into the community for families as well as agencies. By having informed staff, Starting Points is a source of referral for families, agencies, civic groups and the faith based community. The Morgan County Starting Points centers offer inkind space to community groups. Starting Points provides valuable services to families who may otherwise slip through the cracks.

Jackie Fischer-Murray

Project Director, 21st CCLC

Morgan County Schools

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West Virginia Center for Civic Life
West Virginia Family Leadership First Council
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Community and Other Supporters

Bishop Hodges Pastoral Center
Brooke County Public Library
Cairo Community Building
Ceredo-Kenova Public Library
Clarksburg-Harrison County Public Library
Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library
Phillipi City Building
Raleigh County Public Library
Schoenbaum Family Enrichment Center
Webster County Community Building
Wood County Public Library
WV Southern Community College, Logan Campus

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West Virginia Community Voices Partnership

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