Community Choices

Public Policy Education Program

Module Seven

Human Resources and the Family

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Module Seven Instructor's Guide

Human Resources and the Family

Objectives

- To review the definitions of family.

- To describe key characteristics of families today.

- To discuss the role of families in relation to their human resource development functions.

- To develop an appreciation of the importance of making community investments in families.

- To develop strategies for strengthening families.

Procedures and Timeline

- Present background information on the role of families, including the changing demographic characteristics of families, and the human resource development role (educational performance and career aspirations) that families perform for their children. This session seeks to evaluate the families' capacity to accomplish their human resource development function and to explore strategies that can help families in carrying out such a function. (About 30 minutes.)

- Incorporate any of the following small group activities. Do as many of these activities as time will permit.

  ➢ Review definitions of family as presented in the overview. PowerPoints on definitions and the Newsweek/Gallup Poll are provided. Do Activity #1 or an alternate that you develop. (About 20 minutes)

  ➢ Examine beliefs about families how they may affect policy on children and families. Activity #2 is designed to compare the groups' beliefs with those reported in a national pool. Discuss similarities and differences. (About 20 minutes)

  ➢ Present Activity #3. Ask the whole group to list current local programs designed to assist families in performing their roles as human resource developers. (About 20 minutes)

  ➢ Have each person complete the *Family Friendly Community Checklist* (Activity #4). When each person has completed the checklist and has calculated the Family Friendly nature of their community, the individuals should be asked to share their results. This can be done with the entire group or in smaller groups. Have the participants work as teams in completing the final three questions that deal with strategies for strengthening the family friendly nature of their community. (About 40 minutes)

Materials Needed

♦ Handouts needed for Activities #1, 2, 3 and 4.

♦ Microsoft PowerPoint, markers, overhead pens, tape, blackboard or newsprint

Human Resources and the Family: The Roles and Functions of Families

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The American family has undergone significant changes in the last few decades. The perception of many people is that the health of families has weakened. In part, the concern tends to be linked to the fact many family situations today deviate from the traditional view regarding family composition—one that includes the presence of both parents in the home, and a mother who stays at home to rear the children. While many continue to embrace this image of the traditional family, in reality, it falls short of being the dominant family type present in today's society. In fact, only a quarter of all families in the U.S. fit this popular imagery of the American family.

In this module, we examine some of the current definitions of families and describe some of their key characteristics. In addition, we highlight recent data that help profile the various family arrangements existing in the U.S. and South today. Next, we give specific attention to the significant roles that families play in the development of human resources – through child-rearing and other complementary activities. Finally, we present some of the strategies that have been proposed to further strengthen the ability of parents to carry out their key human resource development function.

Accompanying this overview document is a set of activities and powerpoint documents. They have been incorporated into this module in order to engage groups in a discussion of local issues affecting families, in an examination of alternatives strategies for assisting families, in an assessment of potential consequences associated with these alternatives, and putting in place an implementation plan that is modeled after the public policy education framework outlined in Module One.

> "Children learn beliefs, values and behaviors in the family context. These give them an educational orientation that defines the kind of career preparation they will receive."

Definitions

An appropriate beginning point for this module is to undertake an examination of what is meant by the word "family." Unfortunately, finding a common definition of "family" is far an easy task. Tax bills, welfare and insurance payments, adoption procedures, and other events can all be dependent on how family is defined.

How the Family is Viewed:

◆ A household, including servants as well as kin of the householder (Webster's Dictionary of the English Language).

◆ Two or more persons related by birth, marriage or adoption who reside in the same household (U.S. Census Bureau).

◆ Exclusivity and longevity of a relationship; the level of emotional and financial commitment; how a couple conducts their everyday lives and holds themselves out to society; and the reliance placed upon one another for daily services (New York State Supreme Court. Note the absence of blood or legal tie through marriage or adoption).

◆ Measured by the functions it performs for its members; maintains the physical health and safety of members; helps shape a belief system of goals and values; teaches social skills; and creates a place for recuperation from external stresses (State of California Task Force on the Future of the Family).

These definitions offer evidence of the divergent ways in which families are being considered in today's society.

What Are Families Like Today?

Most reports tell us that the family has changed significantly since the period of the 1970s. This fact is most apparent when one realizes that fewer than 10 percent of Americans live in the traditional male-headed, male breadwinner household. One is more likely to find families in the 1990s who are either headed by two parents working outside the home, or by single mothers employed in the labor force. The economic need to have both parents working, as well as the larger number of people who are experiencing divorces, are among the factors that have contributed to these changes.

Statistics paint an interesting picture of today's families. More than 50 percent of marriages that began during the 1980s are likely to end in divorce [1]. Of white children, 40 percent reach age 17 without two biological parents in the home. For African American children, the figure is twice that number. Table 1 begins to offer a good view of the various family environments in which children find themselves today, and how family arrangements have changed since 1980. On an overall basis, the number of children under 18 years old living in a family with both parents present has decreased from 77 percent in 1980 to 68 percent today. Two-parent families are highest among whites in 1998 (68 percent), followed by Hispanics (64 percent). Slightly over one-third of African American children under 18 years of age have both parents present in the home (36 percent). In fact, 51 percent of these children reside in 'Mother Only" households.

Table 1. Children Under 18 Years Old, by Presence of Parents, 1980-1998

Race and Hispanic Origin, by Year	Number (in 1,000)	Both Parents	Percent Living With . . .						Father Only	Neither Parent
			Mother Only							
			Total	Divorced	Married, spouse absent	Never Married	Widowed			
ALL RACES										
1980	63,427	77	18	8	6	3	2		2	4
1990	64,137	73	22	8	5	7	2		3	3
1998	71,377	68	23	8	5	9	1		4	4
WHITE										
1980	52,242	83	14	7	4	1	2		2	2
1990	51,390	79	16	8	4	3	1		3	2
1998	56,124	74	18	8	4	5	1		5	3
BLACK										
1980	9,375	42	44	11	16	13	4		2	12
1990	10,018	38	51	10	12	27	2		4	8
1998	11,414	36	51	9	9	32	1		4	9
HISPANIC										
1980	5,459	75	20	6	8	4	2		2	4
1990	7,174	67	27	7	10	8	2		3	3
1998	10,863	64	27	6	8	12	1		4	5

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States 2000

Table 2. Unmarried Couples in the United States, 1980-1999

Number by Presence of Children	YEAR				
	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999
Unmarried Couples (in thousands)	1,589	1,983	2,856	3,668	4,486
No Children Under 15 Years Old	1,159	1,380	1,966	2,349	2,981
Some Children Under 15 Years Old	431	603	891	1,319	1,505
Percent With Children Under 15 Years Old	27.1	30.4	31.2	35.9	33.5

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States 2000

Table 3. Families With Own Children Under 18 Years Old, by Metropolitan-Nonmetropolitan Residence in the U.S., 1998

Place of Residences	Number of Families (in thousands), and the Percent of Families, With Own Children Under 18 Years Old			
	All Races	White	Black	Hispanic
Metropolitan				
Total	27,872	41,072	7,781	8,620
Married-Couple Families	20,243 (72.7%)	32,719 (79.7%)	3,341 (42.9%)	6,138 (71.2%)
Male Householder	1,355 (4.9%)	1,732 (4.2%)	292 (3.7%)	347 (4.0%)
Female Household	6,273 (22.5%)	6,621 (16.1%)	4,149 (53.3%)	2,136 (24.8%)
Nonmetropolitan				
Total	6,888	10,894	1,335	958
Married-Couple Families	5,026 (73.0%)	8,545 (78.4%)	654 (49.0%)	696 (72.7%)
Male Householder	443 (6.4%)	531 (4.9%)	78 (5.8%)	49 (5.1%)
Female Household	1,419 (20.6%)	1,817 (16.7%)	602 (45.1%)	213 (22.2%)

Source: Current Population Survey, March 1998

For white and Hispanic children living in "Mother Only" families, the main reason for this status is due to a divorce. For African Americans, "Mother Only" families are becoming increasingly linked to the never married status of the mother. In 1998, 32 percent of Black children living in a "Mother Only" family had a mother who was never married. In 1980, the figure was only 13 percent. A large proportion of these unmarried mothers are teenagers.

What has undergone dramatic increases in recent years has been the existence of unmarried couples (cohabitation). In 1980, just under 1.6 million couples were cohabiting (see Table 2). This number increased to 2.9 million in 1990, and has approached the 4.5 million mark in 1999. This represents a 282 percent increase over the 1980-99 time period. Of the 4.5 million unmarried couples in the U.S., nearly 34 percent have children under 15 years of age in the home.

When the living arrangements of children under 18 years of age are examined by place of residence, we uncover only minor differences. Overall, most children under 18 years old living in either a metro or nonmetro area tend to be living in married couple family (see Table 3). Little differences exists among white or Hispanic families with regard to family type. Nonmetro Black children under 18 years of age are more likely to live in a married-couple family then metro Black children (49 percent vs. 42.9 percent). The largest share of metro Black children under 18 are living in female households (53.3 percent).

The distribution of family households in the South by family type is presented in Table 4. It presents the actually number of family households that are composed of married couple, male only, and female only parents. Figure 1 visually presents the proportional distribution of these family households by race. Among white family households, some 82 percent are composed of married couple families. Among Hispanics, the lion's share of family households are made up of married couple families (73.6 percent). Approximately 1 in 4 Hispanic family households involve the presence of a female only parent. With regard to African American family households, nearly 48 percent are made up of married couple families, while a near equal proportion (45.6 percent) have a female only parent in the household.

Women Participation in the U.S. Labor Force

While the structure of America's families has undergone dramatic changes over the past few decades, an equally significant change has occurred in the involvement of women in the labor force, especially among women with children. As Table 5 reveals, less than 2 in 5 married women with any children were engaged in the workforce in 1970. By 1999, the number had expanded to 7 in 10 . When specific ages of children are examined, we find that barely 30 percent of married women with young children under 6 years of age were employed in the workforce in 1970. This number doubled (61.8 percent) by 1999. Among women who were widowed, divorced, or separated, approximately 1 in 2 with children under 6 were actively working in 1970. By 1999, the number had grown to more than 3 in 4. For women with children 6-17 years of age, the

"Despite the increasing involvement of women in the work force, the 1991 poverty statistics are startling when examined by family type."

Table 4. Type of Family Households in the South (in 1,000s) by Race and Ethnicity, 1998

Type of Family Household	Race/Ethnicty		
	White	Black	Hispanic
Married Couple Family	16,684	2,261	1,724
Male Householder	1,007	305	147
Female Householder	2,662	2,155	470

Source: Current Population Survey, March 1998

Figure 1. Distribution of Family Households in the South in 1998
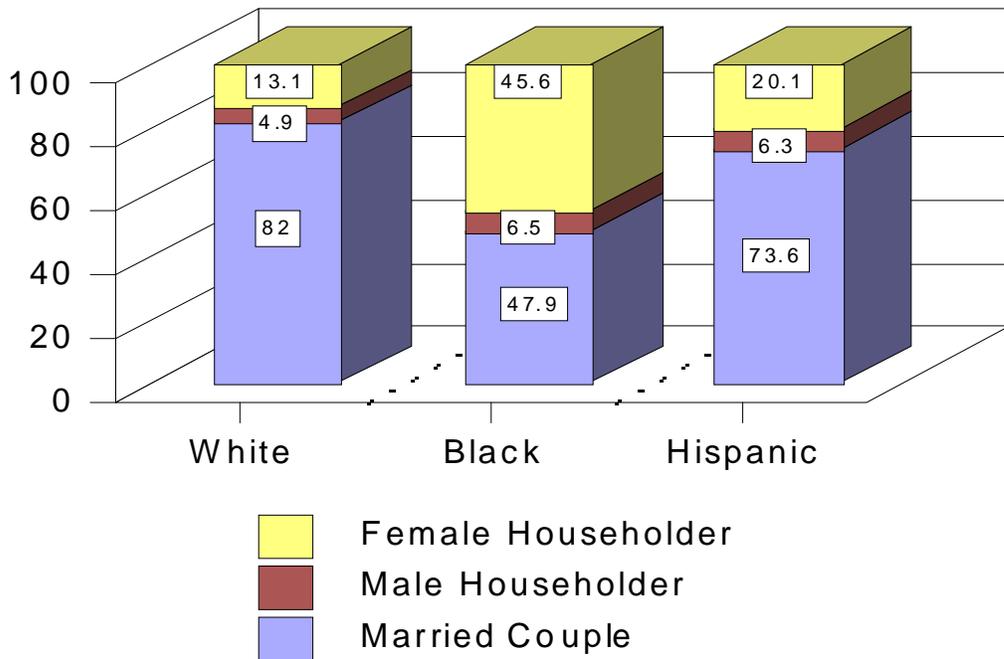
Table 5. Labor Force Participation Rates of U.S. Women in the Labor Force by Marital and Presence and Age of Children, 1970-1999

Year	Total			With Any Children				
				Children 6 to 17 Years Old Only			Children Under 6 Years Ol	
	Single	Married[1]	Other[2]	Single	Married	Other	Single	Married
1970	Not Available	39.7	60.7	Not Available	49.2	66.9	Not Available	30.3
1980	52.0	54.1	69.4	67.6	61.7	74.6	44.1	45.1
1990	55.2	66.3	74.2	69.7	73.6	79.7	48.7	58.9
1995	57.5	70.2	75.3	67.0	76.2	79.5	53.0	63.5
1999	73.4	70.1	80.4	82.6	77.1	81.8	68.1	61.8

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States 2000

[1] Husband Present

[2] Widowed, Divorced, or Separated

percent employed in 1999 proved to be 77 percent or higher among all three marital status categories examined (i.e., single, married, or other). Clearly, these data show that the lion's share of women with children in the U.S. are actively participating in our nation's labor force.

Poverty Status and Family Type

Despite the increasing involvement of women in the work force, households that are headed by females (with no spouse present) and that have children under 18 years old continue to struggle in terms of their capacity to escape poverty. This fact is made particularly clear when the poverty status of female-headed households is contrasted with that of married couple families.

At the national level, two-parent families with children under 18 years of age living at home are far less likely to be living in poverty than are female-headed households with children in this age grouping (see Figures 2 and 3). Among married couple families, less than 6 percent residing in metro areas were living in poverty in 1999. For their nonmetro counterparts, the figure was nearly 9 percent. Interestingly, nonmetro married couple blacks tended to do better than married black couple in metro areas in terms of escaping poverty. Whether living in a metro or nonmetro area, the percent of married Hispanic couples living below the poverty line proved to be quite sizable in 1999 (16.4 percent in metro, and 21.4 percent in nonmetro areas).

Among female-headed households with no spouse present, a significant percent were poverty stricken in 1999. And, regardless of the race or ethnic group under consideration, poverty proved to be higher among female headed households located in the region's nonmetropolitan areas. For example, among black female headed households with children under 18 years old, poverty touched 44.9 percent of those living in metro households and 56.1 percent of those in nonmetro households (see Figure 3).
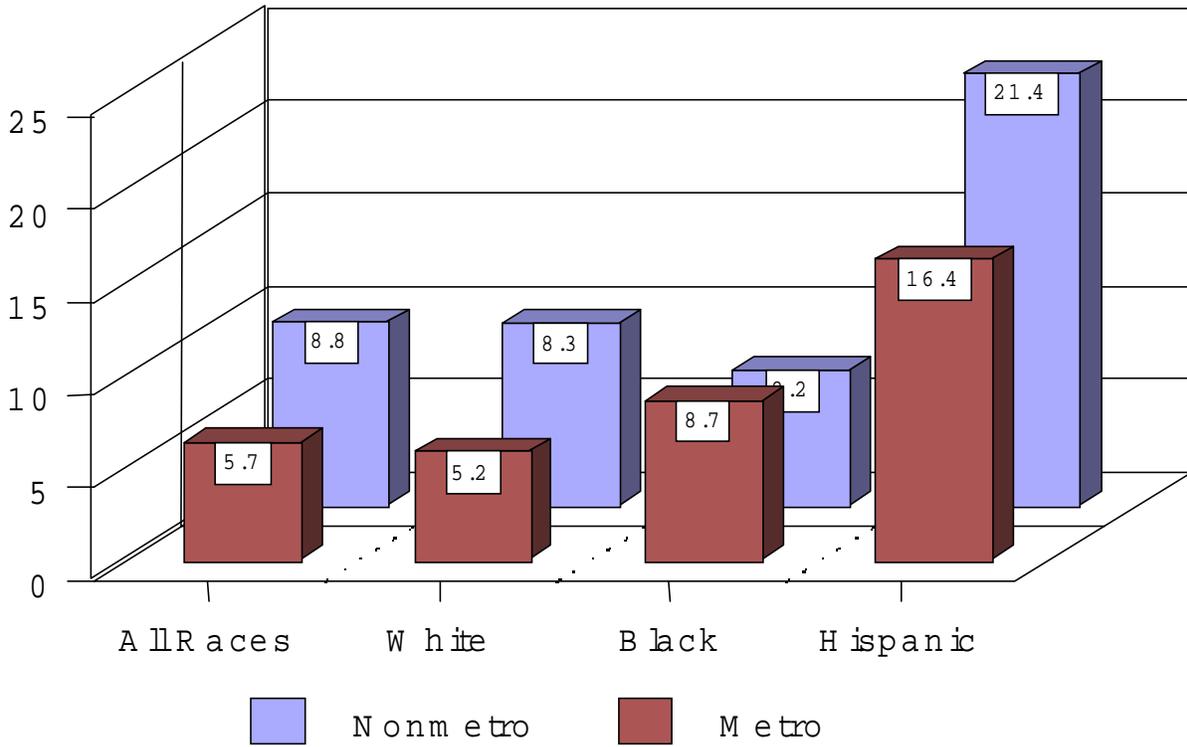
When attention is focused on the Southern region of the United States, one finds that with only a few exceptions, the South is closely aligned with the nation in terms of family poverty rates across race and ethnic groups.   As is true at the national level, poverty among married couple families in the South tends to be highest among Hispanic couples (see Figure 4), particularly among those living in the nonmetro South (23.3 percent). It is among female headed families with children under 18 that poverty tends to be most acute in the South. In particular, the proportion of these families living in poverty (as of 1999) stands at 33.7 percent in the metro South, and 48.5 percent in the nonmetro area of the region. The most impoverished group tends to be black female-headed households (with children under 18 years old) in the nonmetro South (56 percent), closely followed by female headed Hispanic families in the nonmetro South (51.8 percent). The percentage is smaller, but still sizable, among white female headed households in the nonmetro areas of the region, where 43 percent are found to living below the poverty line.

There is little doubt that these trends are having, and will continue to have, a major impact on the lives of many of these children. The changing makeup of the family, coupled with the labor force and poverty attributes of these households, are creating much stress on parents as they strive to effectively carry out their human resource development function. It is to this topic we now turn.
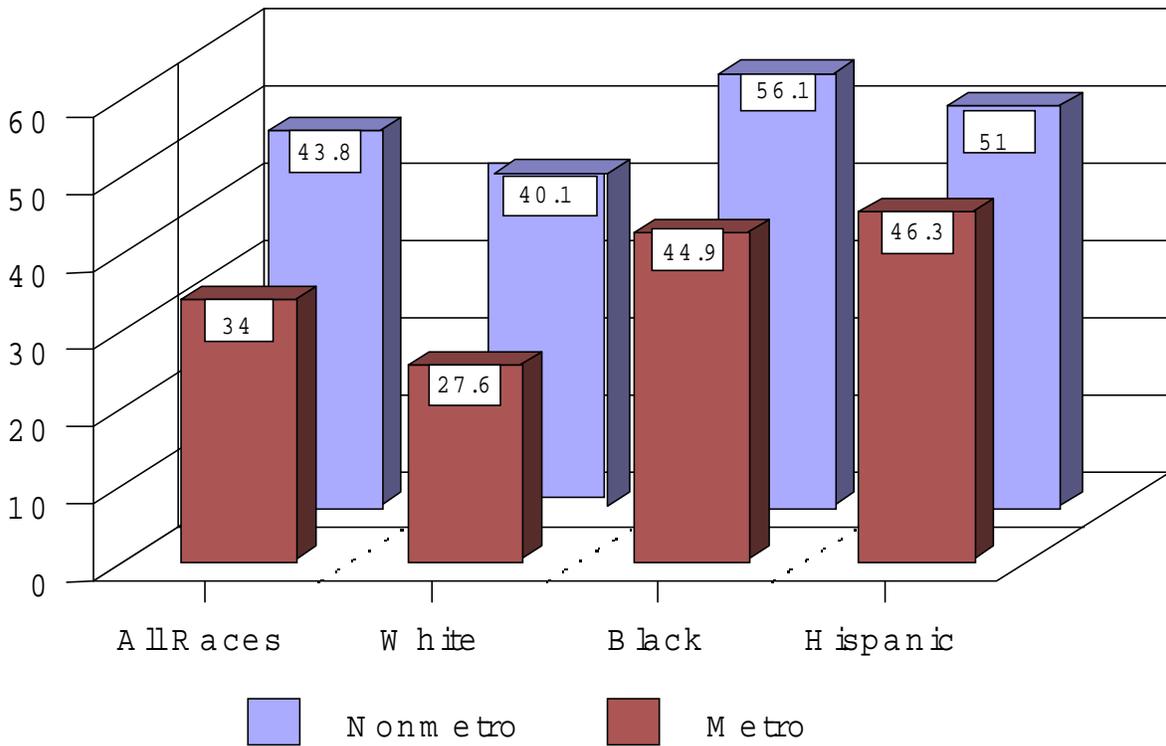
"The changing makeup of the family, coupled with the labor force and poverty attributes of these households, are creating much stress on parents as they strive to effectively carry out their human resource development function."

**Figure 2. Poverty Status of Married Couple Families in the U.S. with Children Under 18 Years Old, 1999**

Figure 2 bar chart data:

	All Races	White	Black	Hispanic
Nonmetro	8.8	8.3	9.2	21.4
Metro	5.7	5.2	8.7	16.4

Figure 3. Poverty Status of Female Headed, No Spouse Present, Families in the U.S. with Children Under 18 Years Old, 1999

Figure 3 bar chart data:

	All Races	White	Black	Hispanic
Nonmetro	43.8	40.1	56.1	51
Metro	34	27.6	44.9	46.3

Source: Current Population Survey, March 2000

Note: Hispanic may be of any race

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Figure 4. Poverty Status of Married Couple Families in the South with Children Under 18 Years Old, 1999
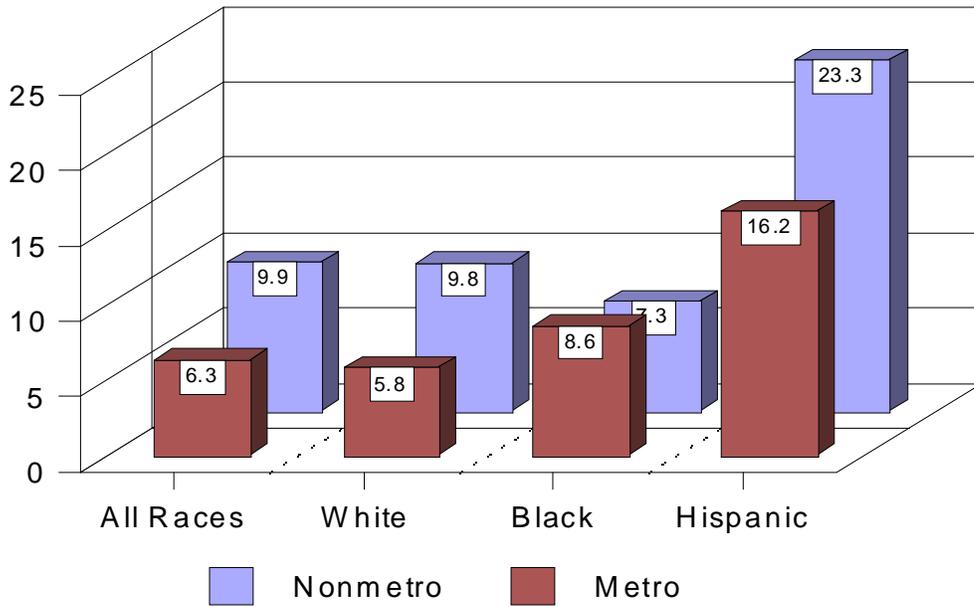
Poverty Status of Female Headed, No Spouse Present, Families in the South with Children Under 18 Years Old, 1999
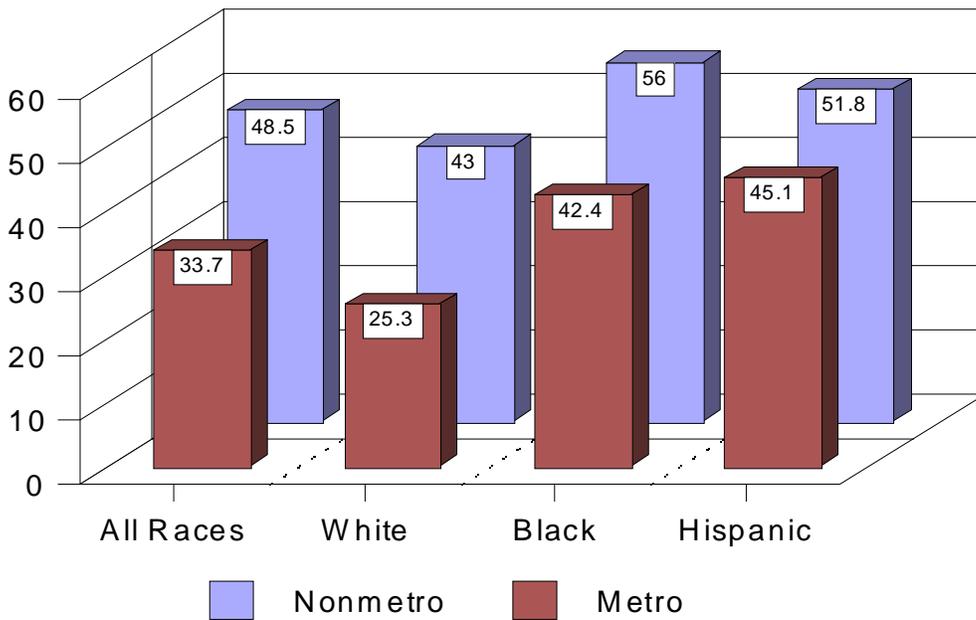
The Human Resource Development Functions of the Family

It has been stated that no other institution is as significant or critically important to a child's (or society's) welfare than is his/her family. This is true across all social and economic lines. Most families, regardless of composition, care enormously about their children. Families prepare their children for education. Through their expectations and aspirations, they place demands on children for performance, both socially or academically. By example, they teach the child how to be a parent, how to be an employee, and how to function in society.

Research conducted by Coleman and his associates [4,5] tend to show that the family's influence on the development of their child can be seen as threefold: families provide financial capital, human capital, and social capital to their child. Financial capital constitutes the wealth and income which the family possesses, resources that can be used to allow the child to take part in activities that might enhance achievement. Human capital represents the educational level of the parents, a measure that offers some clue of the learning environment which the child may be exposed to at home. And social capital reflects the nature of the relationship that exists between the child and his/her parents. It addresses the quality and strength of the interactions between parents and the child.

Why is the research by Coleman and his associates so important? The reason is because for many years, the belief was that the educational and income status of parents had the most potent impact on the human resource development of their children. That is, the socioeconomic status of parents was seen as having a significant influence on the aspirations and achievement levels of their children. So, children from families with higher socioeconomic status (that is, whose parents had a good education and income) were more likely to place a high value on educational achievement and to aspire to higher status occupations.

While the importance of parental socioeconomic status is undeniable, Coleman's research shows that the presence of social capital in the family plays a significant in the human resource development of children. In fact, Coleman states that the educational and financial standing of parents are far less critical to the educational growth of the child if social capital is not present in the family, represented by the quality interactions and relations between parents and the child [2]. As an example, Coleman notes that despite the fact that parents today are better educated than ever before, the academic performance of their children has not always kept pace with the parents' educational standing. The reason, argues Coleman, is that the social capital of the family has slowly eroded because parents are not around the home as much or are not taking the time to interact with and relate to their children.

The bottom line is that this weakening of the family's social capital is having some negative consequences on children as evidenced by poor academic performance and low career aspirations [3]. Newspaper columnist William Raspberry offered a similar argument. He noted that [9] :

> . . . much of what we talk about in our discussions of school failure has little to do with what happens at school and a great deal to do with what happens (or fails to happen) at home. For the youngsters who come to school ready for learning, the schools are working pretty well.

"Research conducted by Coleman and his associates [4,5] tend to show that the family's influence on the development of their child can be seen as threefold: families provide financial capital, human capital, and social capital to their child."

What Coleman's findings, as well as Raspberry's commentary, suggest is that families with high social capital, represented by the presence of adults in the home and positive parent/child interactions on issues such as academic, social, economic and personal concerns, are more likely to have children who are socially competent and academically successful in school. What is most encouraging is that even among parents who have limited education and low incomes, their children can be equally capable of realizing academic success and can effectively transition into the world of work if these children are situated in a family environment where social capital is both present and strong.

The Importance of Community Investments in Families/Children

The academic, emotional, and social problems that many youth are experiencing today has created a situation in which much finger pointing is taking place. Some parents are blaming teachers for their lack of real interest and understanding of children. Teachers are blaming society for its unwillingness to support schools. And parents are being criticized for their lack of attention to and participation in their child's education.

It is true that children who come from disadvantaged economic backgrounds come to school with issues other than academic readiness. Physical health is linked to a child's ability to learn. Children who lack rudimentary health care may have hearing, vision, health problems, emotional difficulties and development delays that will interfere with learning. Children who are hungry or stressed are not able to be attentive in the classroom. Although families are a child's first teacher, many need help in order to meet a child's basic needs.

Several years ago, a report published by the National Association of State Boards of Education titled, *Caring Communities* [7] , outlined a series of recommendations that were designed to create supportive communities that could offer families a much needed helping hand. Two of the recommendations contained in that report remain viable even today. They are as follows:

♦ We recommend providing comprehensive support for young children and their families. Communities should help parents meet their need for health care, child care, and family support through quality public programs, enhanced initiatives by employers, and stronger informal efforts by voluntary organizations and individuals.

♦ We recommend improving support for young children and families in public schools. Elementary schools should implement developmentally appropriate teaching and assessment, based on our understanding of how young children learn and develop. Schools should also strengthen efforts in parent involvement and staff development and work with community agencies to provide appropriate and effective services to children and families.

"What is most encouraging is that even among parents who have limited education and low incomes, their children can achieve much academically and in the world of work if they are successful in creating a family environment in which social capital is both present and strong."

Given the concerns expressed by Coleman regarding the deterioration occurring in the presence of social capital in the home, it appears that a partial response entails a more active role on the part of the community in helping fill the social capital gap that so many young people are experiencing today. The question is how might communities be an important source of social capital for young residents? Among the potential strategies are the following:

♦   Offering youth a set of positive experiences through the establishment of organized youth activities.

♦   Having organizations or individuals who are available to listen to youth who may need help with their problems or who long for someone simply to talk to.

♦   Local people giving attention and consideration to the views that youth have with regard to the future direction of their community.

♦   The business sector having an active involvement in the school system, involvement that is founded on its desire to better assist people to take a hard look at the needs of families youth in their academic performance and their career plans. This could include job shadowing and mentoring programs.

These few examples are all symbolic of the presence of social capital in the community. Together, such initiatives are likely to help youth be successful because of the caring attitude that they perceive as being present in their community.

Building A Family Friendly Community

The changing nature of the American family has raised some concern about the ability of communities to devote attention to the needs of families. Lichter and his colleagues [6] have argued that if a goal of our society is to improve the academic success and job skills of today's youth, focus must be given on the family. Efforts are needed that can further strengthen the ability of families to succeed in their human resource development role. Communities must be a key player in making this happen.

In recent years, Alberta, Canada developed a comprehensive checklist for assessing the family friendliness of a community. Among the key items contained in its checklist were the following [8] :

Neighborhoods
❑   Neighbors welcome families as community members.
❑   People know their neighbors.
❑   Community events are sensitive to, and reflective of, the diversity of family types and multicultural aspects of the area.
❑   Families know about community resources and activities available to them.
❑   Neighbors support each other (block parents, neighborhood crime watch, community leagues).
❑   Neighbors are available and willing to help in an emergency.

Schools
- ❑ Schools welcome families and community members.
- ❑ Schools plan events that include all family members.
- ❑ Schools are responsive to different family types and structures and sensitive to their needs.
- ❑ Schools are accessible to the community that they serve.
- ❑ Outreach support for children in need and their families is facilitated by the school.
- ❑ Business and schools work together in partnership to encourage career explorations, job training, and skill development.

Parenting
- ❑ Workplaces are sensitive to and support the needs of working parents.
- ❑ Support networks are available for families in need.
- ❑ Parents are involved in activities and decisions that affect their children.
- ❑ Community members value and support the role of parents.

Children
- ❑ Community members value and care for children.
- ❑ Children contribute and are a part of the life of the community.
- ❑ Programs are available to support the growth and development of young children.
- ❑ Quality child care alternatives are available and accessible.

Workplaces
- ❑ Workplaces provide options that support the parenting role (such as flextime).
- ❑ Managers are sensitized to work and family realities.

Public Involvement and Support
- ❑ Elected officials are sensitive to family issues.
- ❑ Community-based systems of support for families are available.
- ❑ Policies that are approved by, and programs that are offered by, local governments are assessed for their impact on families.

No doubt, the items contained in this checklist can provide some guidance on the type of concrete strategies that might be undertaken to advance the well-being of parents and their children. Certainly, taking steps to become a family friendly community will not be easy. On the other hand, failure to invest in local families and children may spell trouble in the future. Simply put, families play a vital role in shaping the educational and career aspirations of their children. Thus, they are a key ingredient in advancing the human resource endowments of a community.

So, the questions a community must constantly ask itself is this: "What must be done, if anything, to strengthen the ability of local families to carry out their important roles and functions? What should the community do to promote the human resource development of its young people?" Certainly, the answers to these questions are far from easy, but they warrant careful discussion and deliberation by community leaders and citizens.

References

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[4] Coleman, J.S. and T. Hoffer. 1987. Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities. New York: Basic Books.

[5] Coleman, J.S, T. Hoffer, and S. Kilgore. 1982. High School Achievement. New York: Basic Books.

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[8] Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families. 1994. "Family friendly community checklist: International Year of the Family. Edmonton, Canada.

[9] Raspberry, William. 1992. "Something has to be done at home." Article appearing in the February 25 issue of the Gainesville Sun, Gainesville, Florida.

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Human Resources and the Family

Small Group Activities

Human Resources and the Family

Activity #1

    U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart once stated that we might not be able to define a family, but we know one when we see it. Because definitions of families vary widely, it is helpful to have the group develop a working definition of family. Depending on total group size, this might be done in small groups.

- Brainstorm family definitions, functions, and characteristics. Accept everything at this point - no discussion of pro's and con's.

- Go through each of items listed in previous activity and discuss each in terms of inclusivity/exclusivity and utility in defining legal and social relationships. If the group has difficulty generating ideas in activity one, use the elements of each definition previously provided; for example, two or more people related by birth or related by marriage residing in the same household.

- Develop a definition that is acceptable to the group from the selection of characteristics in the second activity. Who in the community "fits" into this definition? Who does not fit? Was Supreme Court Justice Potter correct?

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Human Resources and the Family
Activity #2

After thinking about the definition of family, what shape are families in? A poll can be taken of the group. Local views can be compared with the Newsweek/Gallup Organization Poll. N/G items are responses to the Newsweek/Gallup Poll conducted in November 1990.

♦ Is the American family better off or worse off than it was 10 year ago?

_____ Better _____ Worse

N/G 39% Better 49% Worse

♦ Will the American family be better off or worse off 10 years from now? Better

_____ Better _____ Worse

N/G 42% Better 42% Worse

♦ Which do you feel is more important for a family these days?

_____ To make some financial sacrifices so that
N/G 68% one parent can stay home to raise the children.

_____ To have both parents working so the family
N/G 27% can benefit from the highest possible income.

♦ When husbands and wives with young children are not getting along, should they stay together for the sake of the children or should they separate rather than raise the children in a hostile atmosphere?

_____ Separate _____ Stay together

N/G 70% Separate % Stay together

Which one of theses family concerns causes you to worry the most?

N/G

_____Finding and paying for good health care 21%

_____Keeping up with housing costs/payments 17%

_____Paying for children's college tuition 16%

_____Financing your retirement 12%

_____Getting good day care for children 9%

_____Taking care of elderly, ailing parents

♦ Do you think the provisions and funding of government programs for elderly, such as Medicare and social security, are adequate to meet your needs now or in the future?

		No		Yes
N/G	68%	No	28%	Yes

♦ Should unmarried couples, including homosexual couples, have the same legal rights as married couples?

Unmarried couples		Yes		No
N/G	33%	Yes	61%	No

Homosexual couples		Yes		No
N/G	23%	Yes	69%	No
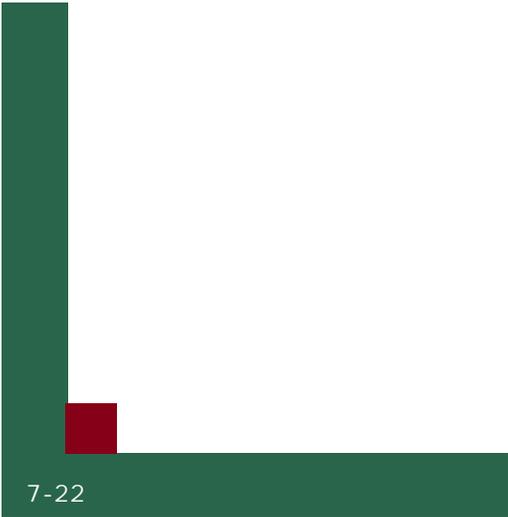
Human Resources and the Family
Activity #3

1. Do an environmental scan of local support available to families. Use the following chart.

Agency/ Institution	Type of Program	Formal/ Informal	Target Families (Audiences)

2.   Review the scan and list gaps in any of the columns. Review for duplication/ competition of/for services and audiences.

3.   Brainstorm methods for alleviating local gaps in service and support.

4.   Discuss the potential consequences of each method generated in number 3.

Human Resources and the Family

Family Friendly Community Checklist[1]

Introduction

This *Family Friendly Community Checklist* has been developed as a tool to assist communities in reviewing those aspects of the community that can detract from, or contribute to, family well-being.

You are being asked to imagine a community that you are happy to live in and proud of the way it supports families. Then imagine what it takes to make that happened. This Checklist offers suggestions, which are intended to trigger thought and discussion. The intent of this Checklist is to raise the profile of families and their needs. It is intended to encourage communities to assess how they demonstrate their concern about families. This might include anything from having a local campaign to improve cleanliness in the community, making buildings more accessible to parents with strollers, or involving seniors in a neighborhood child care program. It may involve training staff to be more sensitive to family needs or it may mean improving safety on a playground.

The Checklist can be used to assess your community from the perspective of the neighborhood or at a broader level. Check the areas where you feel your community has been supportive of family members of all ages and indicate where changes are needed. Find out the needs and priorities of families and establish a plan to improve the supports available to them in your community.

The *Family Friendly Community Checklist* is a beginning step in helping you to make improvements in your community to better support families. By evaluating the impact that different aspects of the community have on families and family life, you can identify where improvements are necessary. This Checklist has been developed as a resource in order to help highlight the needs of families and the extent or support available to them in their communities.

Making this Checklist Relevant to Your Community

Community can be defined in a variety of ways. The Family Friendly Community checklist can be applied at any level, be it at the county, municipality, or the neighborhood. It can be used by city/town councils, boards, neighborhood groups, or any organization within a community having a desire to review the family friendliness of various parts of the community (such as schools, shopping facilities, churches, recreational programs).

This Checklist is designed to spark ideas and discussions about the family friendliness of your community. It is intended to be used as a guide for contributing to a more family friendly community. Not all of the items will apply in every situation. The Checklist can be expanded to fit your requirements by adding additional items under each category.

Please rate your community on the following items. Place a checkmark (∨) by each of the items that you feel exist in your community right now.

1. Neighborhoods

❑ Neighbors welcome families as community members

❑ People know their neighbors

❑ Appropriate community events and celebrations include all family members

❑ Community events are sensitive to, and reflective of, the diversity of family types and multicultural aspects of the area

❑ Families know about community resources and activities available to them through community bulletin boards, information lines, publications etc.

❑ Locations are established for families, to recycle toys, tools, clothing, equipment, etc.

❑ Families have access to a community meeting house or venue

❑ Food stores, public library, swimming pool, park, playground, post office, meeting places, community halls are within easy access of neighborhoods

❑ Houses and neighborhoods are designed to meet family needs (safe, accessible, child friendly, adequate lighting, safe crosswalks, road maintenance, sidewalks, etc.)

❑ Neighbors support each other (block parents, neighborhood crime watch, community leagues)

❑ Public transportation systems arid community-based systems of support are accessible and available to all members of the community

❑ Neighbors are available and willing to help in an emergency

❑ Mediation is available to settle disputes between neighbors

❑ There are natural gathering places for people of all ages

❑ There is a sense of pride and cooperation in the community (i.e., hospitable, neighborhood cleanups, etc.)

Based on a consideration of all these factors, how does your community rate? (Circle one)

Excellent		Good			Needs Improvement	
5	4	3	2	1	0

2. Schools

❑ Schools welcome families and community members

❑ Schools plan events that include all family members

❑ Schools are responsive to different family types and structures and sensitive to their needs

❑ Schools are accessible to the community that they serve

❑ Outreach support for children in need and their families is facilitated/arranged by the school

❑ Public participation is initiated on decisions that affect families

❑ Schools have effective, functioning parent advisory committees

❑ Before and after school child care is available at or near the school with busing arrangements where required

❑ The curriculum is sensitive to community values and standards

❑ Schools are designed to meet the needs of children and their families (cafeteria, playgrounds, recreation areas, etc.)

❑ School facilities are made available for after house use

❑ Staff are friendly when meeting the public

❑ Parent/teacher meetings are arranged to reflect parents' work schedules

❑ Business and schools work together in partnerships to encourage career exploration, job training, and skill development

Based on a consideration of all these factors, how does your community rate? (Circle one)

Excellent		Good			Needs Improvement	
5	4	3	2	1		0
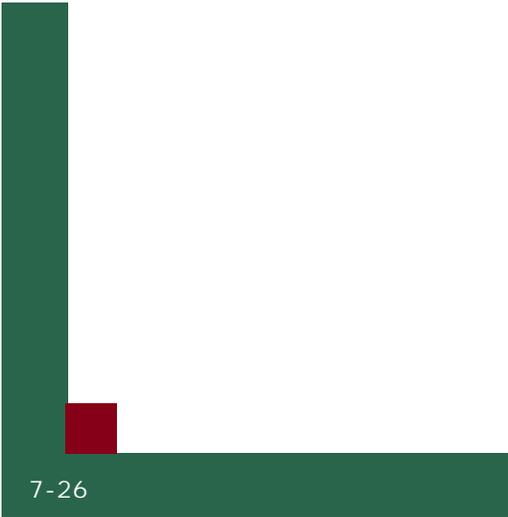
3. Playgrounds/Parks/Public Places

❑ Playground equipment (swings, slides, teeter-totters, etc.) is safe, well maintained and built to proper standards

❑ Designated areas are available for children of different age groups

❑ Public places are available for varying needs of families

❑ Play areas are designated and protected

❑ Shady and sunny areas are available

❑ Proper ground maintenance is evident

❑ Area is free of dangerous objects (i.e., glass, sharp objects)

❑ There are places for parents to sit and talk while children play

❑ Picnic areas are provided

❑ Garbage receptacles are provided

❑ Playgrounds are easily accessible for children

❑ Play zones are clearly marked for passing motorists

❑ Community gardens are available

❑ Public spaces are attractive for family use (wild flowers, fruit bearing trees, etc.)

❑ Attractive rest areas are available in public places

❑ Parks are planned for safe use by citizens both during the day and at night

❑ Playgrounds and parks offer programs that the whole family can participate in for various age groups

Based on a consideration of all these factors, how does your community rate? (Circle one)

| **Excellent**		**Good**			**Needs Improvement**	
5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**0**

4. Security

❑ Fire departments, police stations, ambulance services have a reasonable response time to all neighborhoods in the community

❑ Supports, both formal and informal, are available to families in case of violence, crime, substance dependency, gambling addiction, racism, child abuse, spouse abuse, sexual abuse or vandalism

❑ Families feel safe and secure in the neighborhood at all time (Neighborhood Crime Watch, Block Parents, known places to go when in trouble)

❑ Community members are aware of the problems/issues in their community

❑ Community members are involved in improving the neighborhood

❑ The community has adequate lighting for streets, buildings, and public places

❑ People watch out for each other, their homes and their property

❑ Neighbors know each other, and can count on help from each other in an emergency

❑ Community members join together to act on issues of concern

❑ Partnerships between the police and families on crime prevention techniques are encouraged

❑ Information on services offered to families on fire protection, tips to prevent fires, and safe fire routes are distributed and reviewed

❑ Families are informed about services, neighborhood routes and times of police surveillance

Based on a consideration of all these factors, how does your community rate? (Circle one)

Excellent	Good			Needs Improvement	
5	4	3	2	1	0
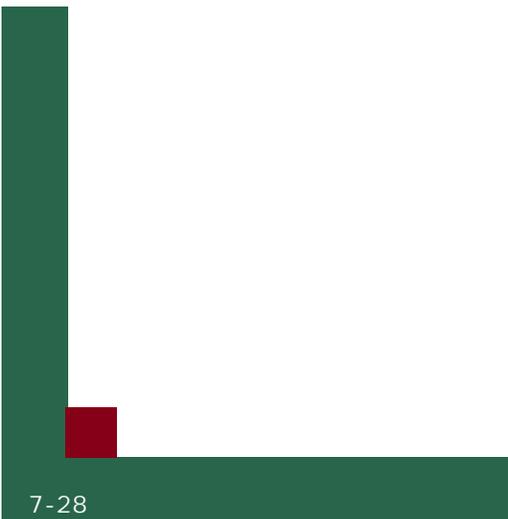
5. Health and Wellness

❑ Family members are aware of the range of health care services available to them in their community

❑ Emergency medical care is available on a 24 hour basis

❑ Local health facilities and ambulance services are available

❑ Family physicians are accessible to the community

❑ Preventive services are available to provide information and assistance on diet and nutrition, fitness and lifestyle, and stress management for families

❑ Support, counseling and referral are available for families and their members dealing with problems

❑ Health professionals, hospitals and emergency services are sensitive to the special needs of children and their families

❑ Families with special support needs (i.e., seniors, disabled, mentally ill persons) have access to appropriate health care services

❑ Self-help groups are available and encourage participation

❑ Faith communities make their facilities available for use by the community

❑ Faith communities are active in providing support through outreach work and networking

❑ Recreational programs are well publicized and accessible to all community members

❑ Families have access to local recreation for health and fitness

❑ Opportunities for volunteer involvement are made available

❑ Adequate attention is given to ensure a safe environment for families

Based on a consideration of all these factors, how does your community rate? (Circle one)

Excellent		Good			Needs Improvement	
5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**		**0**

6. Family Serving Agencies

❑ Staff treat family members with respect, and spend time and effort in developing rapport with family members

❑ Services assist family members to build and maintain their confidence and competence in their family roles

❑ Services build on the strengths of the family as a whole as well as its individual members

❑ Services help family members to become an active part of the program as well as a resource for each other

❑ Parents play an important part in program decisions

❑ Program is located in community it serves

❑ Services are available at hours that are convenient for families

❑ Staff view family members' search for information and support as a sign of family strength, not a sign of weakness

❑ Program serves as a resource to family members, providing information about its own services and about other resources in the community

❑ Program in 'family-friendly' and welcomes all family members

❑ Programs that fit the demographic mix of the community are offered after consultations with the community

❑ The needs, desires, feelings, and strengths of all family members are considered in relation to service planning and delivery

❑ Family members are informed as to who will have access to information about the family and how confidentiality will be maintained

❑ Family members have the option of being present and participating in discussions about their family

❑ An appeal process is available, and family members are informed about how to use it to resolve their concerns

Based on a consideration of all these factors, how does your community rate? (Circle one)

Excellent		Good					Needs Improvement	
5		4		3		2	1	0

Community Choices: Public Policy Education Program

7. Parenting

❑ Workplaces are sensitive to and support the needs of working parents

❑ Support networks are available for families in need

❑ A community resource guide is available for parents

❑ Programs and support for the parenting role are available (information, support, resources, etc.)

❑ Parents are involved in activities and decisions that affect their children (education, health, career, etc.)

❑ Appropriate advocacy groups that address issues of concern to parents are present

❑ Appeal mechanisms are available to parents on decisions which affect their families

❑ Parent and children are helped to feel welcome by staff and customers at local restaurants, shopping malls, and businesses

❑ Programs and activities which involve parents and children are available

❑ Community members value and support the role of parents

❑ There is support available in the community for parents who stay at home with their children

Based on a consideration of all these factors, how does your community rate? (Circle one)

Excellent		Good			Needs Improvement	
5	4	3	2	1	0

8. Children

❑ Children have access to both parents, to their grandparents or other seniors, and to members of their extended families

❑ Community members value and care for children

❑ Children contribute and are a part of the life of the community

❑ Children are present and participate in activities and events organized by the community

❑ Programs, such as preschool classes and parent-child activities, are available to support the growth and development of young children and to support the role of parents

❑ Children in trouble know where to go for help (Block Parents, counselors, distress line, etc.)

❑ Local restaurants, shopping malls and businesses have change rooms, play areas, and staff that are happy to serve children

❑ Streets and crossings are safe for children and walkways are clean and well lit

❑ Play areas are safe and visible to parents

❑ Quality child care alternatives are available and accessible to those who require them

❑ Facilities are accessible to strollers, carriages, walkers, wheelchairs, etc.

❑ Safe places are available for children to participate in unstructured play activities

❑ Supervised arts and craft programs are available to encourage children's creativity

❑ Activities for children are available without concern for cost (nature walks, etc.)

Based on a consideration of all these factors, how does your community rate? (Circle one)

Excellent		Good			Needs Improvement	
5	4	3	2	1	0

9. Teenagers and Young Adults

❑ Teenagers and young adults have opportunities for input into planning and decision-making about youth programs and activities

❑ Teenagers and young adults are supported in planned community events

❑ Employment and volunteer opportunities are available for teenagers and young adults

❑ Counseling and education are available on teen pregnancy, drugs and alcohol, sexuality, parenting, relationships, etc.

❑ Teen parents are supported in the community in both their parenting and student roles

❑ Staff in local restaurants, malls, and businesses treat teenagers with respect

❑ Community members value and care for teenagers and young adults

❑ Teens contribute and are a part of the life of the community

❑ Teens are present and participate in activities and events

❑ There are places and spaces available for teen gatherings (sports, dances, etc.)

❑ Adult and peer counseling are available for teenagers and young adults who need help and support

❑ Parents, teachers, counselors and others are able to identify depression in teenagers and young adults and provide needed support and referral

❑ Educational opportunities are available to meet the needs of young adults

❑ Support is available for teens and young adults experiencing problems

Based on a consideration of all these factors, how does your community rate? (Circle one)

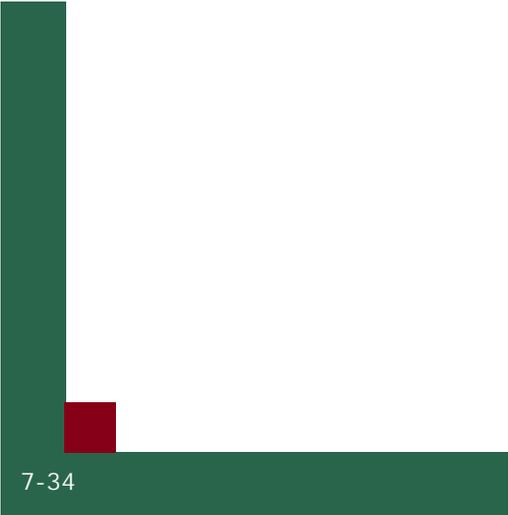| Excellent		Good			Needs Improvement	
5	4	3	2	1	0

10. Seniors

❑ There are organized ways of encouraging intergenerational activities involving seniors

❑ Seniors have recognized and accessible roles to play in meaningful work, volunteer, and other types of activities

❑ Seniors have an opportunity for input into the decision-making process, i.e., participate in community meetings to discuss local/community issues

❑ Community members value and care for seniors

❑ Seniors participate in activities and events in the community

❑ Adult children are supported in their care giving responsibilities for their senior parents

❑ Flexible options are available for seniors to maintain independent living with access to and support from family members

❑ Seniors are encouraged to get involved in community services and activities

❑ Public transportation routes are appropriate around areas with high density senior citizens residents

❑ Senior citizens are assisted by allowing off-hour unscheduled stops for their safety on public transportation

Based on a consideration of all these factors, how does your community rate? (Circle one)

Excellent		Good			Needs Improvement	
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Community Choices: Public Policy Education Program

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