

The Library Foundation of Hennepin County has developed and implemented a community outreach model utilizing current immigrant FFN care providers and their families as Community Ambassadors to build an informal information sharing network to connect additional FFN providers and their families to the wealth of resources, information and services available in the community. Hennepin County school districts, as partners in the grant, designed practice pre-school programs for immigrant and refugee families.

Neighborhood House partners have developed culturally relevant services, interactive activities and resource fairs. They provide support and outreach to FFN caregivers through a networking system and group meeting opportunities through on-site programming at low-income housing sites that offer trainings sessions on issues of concern to caregivers.

WCA Schools/Thorson Library offers the Family Friend and Neighbor Outreach program, a collaborative effort that provides training materials and children's activities based on the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. The library hosts play and learn groups and special events that are organized following the ECFE model of child/adult time together and periods of separate instruction. The focus is on health, safety, nutrition and school readiness.

White Earth Reservation is working with Mahnomon, Becker and Clearwater counties to provide services to FFN providers. Offerings include monthly home visits with the Readmobile, the stock of which has been improved, and materials and events in the Ojibwe language. In addition, books and other literacy materials have been purchased to give to the children.

Working with ZERO TO THREE and the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC), Minnesota has drafted a statewide strategic plan for family, friend and neighbor care. The State will continue support for the existing grantees in 2010-11 using federal funds provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

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September 21, 2009





Welcome & Introductions

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This conference is possible through the generous support of The McKnight Foundation, The Minneapolis Foundation and The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Celebrating Groundbreaking Legislation

In 2007, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$750,000 for the 2008-09 biennium to a new family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care competitive grant program to expand services and supports for FFN caregivers throughout the state. Minnesota became the first state to provide explicit state financing focused upon strengthening such care through broad-based community actions. In doing so, it acknowledged that for states seeking educational equity and expansion of early learning opportunities for low-income children, and to achieve a goal of school readiness for all children, FFN care must be a core part of the equation.

The ground-breaking legislation gives priority to FFN caregivers receiving child care subsidies, those caring for infants and toddlers, and those providing FFN care in underserved culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including immigrant and refugee communities. Furthermore, it explicitly recognizes the role of informal FFN caregivers in supporting young children – caregivers who provide care to children they already know in order to help out those children’s parents, largely on an unpaid basis. It also recognizes the importance of offering public funding and supports, on a voluntary basis, to such FFN caregivers, on a fundamentally different basis than that provided to formal, paid child care providers.

Six grants were funded throughout the state to provide early literacy and school readiness services to children in family, friend and neighbor child care settings supported by community-based partnerships.

The Northland Foundation conducts a regional FFN caregiver outreach assessment, implements training and education strategies in the four FFN program partner sites, creates a learning community among the Northland Alliance partners and creates an innovative concepts fund. The project also connects FFN caregivers and the children they care for with the early childhood education programs in four school districts.

The Early Childhood Resource and Training Center focuses on urban American Indian FFN providers and the children they care for in Minneapolis. Trainers speak specifically to issues pertinent to the American Indian Community. The program makes connections with providers using urban centers, clinics and libraries.