**Overview**

In community-based participatory research (CBPR), community members are viewed as equal partners at all stages of a research project. This poster discusses the advantages and challenges of using CBPR with two different Family Partner Programs in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Since August, 2010, the Community Psychology Research Lab at UNC Charlotte has, with funding from NIMH, examined the roles and the impact of the Family Partner Program (FPP) implemented by two agencies: Urban Restoration (Urban) and Thompson’s Child and Family Focus (TCFF).

Evaluators at UNCC developed a database to track both the amount and type of work being conducted by Family Partners (FPs), so that the factors that relate most strongly to positive child and family outcomes could be identified.

**Family Partners**

Family Partners offer community support services to families before, during, and after their engagement with Child Protective Services.

**Family Partners:***
- Attend Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings
- Support families in court proceedings
- Connect families with community resources
- Provide emotional support
- Advocate for families across child serving systems

**This family support model emphasizes:**
1. Family empowerment and strengths, not deficits
2. The provision of resources to all family members, building their capacity to address their needs

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**Implement Structures that Facilitate & Support Research Activities**

**Challenge:** How do we record what kinds of interactions Family Partners are having with clients?

**Resolution:** FPs and UNCC researchers worked together to create forms that FPs thought captured the range of activities they engaged in for any given case.
- Forms were revised several times to develop a balance between time-consuming case notes that provided rich qualitative descriptions and checkboxes that grouped activities into commonly reoccurring themes

**Reflections:** Timely and consistent feedback about the data UNCC was collecting from the forms encouraged Family Partners to be active participants in the form development and refinement process.

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**Develop Technical and Organizational Capacity**

**Challenge:** UNCC provided laptop computers to record their activities with families, but many FPs were uncomfortable or unfamiliar with how to use laptops to fill out the forms.

**Resolution:** UNCC researchers drafted step-by-step handouts of how to operate the laptops. These included directions ranging from how to double-click, zip files, or troubleshoot in Microsoft Word.
- Researchers also held training workshops and answered computer questions on weekly visits.

**Reflections:** UNCC research assistants provided FPs with their cell phone numbers and answered questions that arose during the time between weekly visits. These phone calls were mutually helpful and strengthened the partnership between the two groups.

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**Lessons Learned**

- **It was important to create a partnership based on openness to learning from one another**
  - Example: FPs were open to learning from evaluators how to collect and send data electronically. UNCC listened and responded to FP feedback to make the forms easier to complete.

- **Continual communication about the partnership made it a more effective and mutually rewarding partnership.**
  - Example: UNCC joined Urban’s and TCFF’s already scheduled monthly meetings. This provided UNCC with the opportunity to gain immediate access to the Family Partners and the data without disrupting their routines. Joining the Family Partners at their monthly meetings helped to foster a collaborative relationship as well as provided the Family Partners with direct resources for questions and/or information.

- **Sidebars and missteps were used as opportunities to build mutual respect and trust among partners**
  - Example: FPs were supposed send UNCC case closures so families could be contacted about their experience. After several months of not receiving case closures, FPs explained that they never officially close a case. Instead, they view their support to families as ongoing. Therefore, the partnership worked together to determine a more useful guideline for when family information should be sent to UNCC for family follow-ups.