

Regular Meeting 01/09/03

TO: Juvenile Welfare Board Members

FROM: James E. Mills, Executive Director   
Browning Spence, Director of Community Planning and Research 

## **Pinellas County Safe Start Initiative Phase II Annual Evaluation Report FY 2001-2002**

The report describes the evaluation of the Pinellas County Safe Start Initiative conducted by Rowlette Research Associates during the period from October 31, 2001 to November 30, 2002. Safe Start is a demonstration project funded by The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to develop and implement a community response and prevention system to reduce the impact of exposure to violence on young children (birth to 6 years). Eleven sites across the nation received grants, renewable for up to 5½ years, to work toward developing a response for addressing young children as witnesses to, or victims of, violence.

Services and interventions address both systems level and individual level needs. At the systems level, the initiative seeks to coordinate policies and services between provider agencies, improve identification and response to need within provider agencies, and increase community awareness of the impact of violence exposure on young children. Toward these ends, Pinellas Safe Start provides training to law enforcement, health, early childhood education, and court personnel. In addition, Pinellas Safe Start coordinates multiple agencies toward development of common practices across services and systems. One of the key interventions is the centralized resource and referrals system known as the Safe Start Partnership Center. At the individual service level, the initiative offers services to both parents and children on the basis of need level, which is assessed at first contact. Families with little need are referred to the appropriate agency. Families in greater need receive interventions intended to promote resiliency and family functioning.

Phase I was a formative evaluation intended to facilitate planning and system coordination, and to help articulate a logic model. Phase II evaluation has focused on early implementation, collaboration, training, and modifications of roles and responsibilities. Phase III evaluation will evaluate training, collaboration, systems integration, and outcomes for both children and parents.

The annual evaluation report describes evaluation and program activities completed, interventions aimed at enhancing responsiveness both within and between agencies, progress made toward project goals, and challenges facing the Pinellas County Safe Start Initiative.

Minimum service levels established for the startup period included 50 calls to 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, eight consultation calls handled by Help A Child, six adults and 12 children to receive level III or level IV services, and 60 adult community members to receive group training. During the period, 21 calls were received at 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, three consultation calls were handled by Help A Child, four adults and seven children received level III or IV services, and 120 adult community members received

group training. Hence, the program exceeded minimum service levels for training but fell short of minimum service levels for calls, consultations, and direct level III or IV services.

Outcome evaluation is planned for Phase III evaluation. Phase II evaluation products suggest that key stakeholder agencies have begun collaborative efforts toward system change and enhancement of existing services. In addition, the evaluation has assisted the partner agencies in determining where to focus resources and efforts. The project is behind schedule on meeting some Phase II goals. Specifically, dissemination of CQI information, scheduled for Phase II, has not yet occurred. Development of a three-hour pre-certification module for EMS workers has been deferred to Phase III. Similarly, collaboration toward inclusion of information in police curricula has been deferred to Phase III. New emphasis on the need to address homeland security issues has delayed participation by EMS and law enforcement in the Safe Start Initiative. Finally, development of an Interagency Standards of Care Committee has been deferred to Phase III in order to accommodate collaboration with another major initiative, *Healing the Hurt*. OJJDP confirms that the majority of the other 10 Safe Start sites are experiencing delays of a similar nature to those the Pinellas Initiative has experienced.

In the early implementation stage, the Pinellas Safe Start Initiative has laid the foundation for collaboration, enhancement of services, and system-level change. Partners have trained community members, recruited stakeholder organizations, coordinated their efforts, and begun delivering both referrals and direct services. Early qualitative results suggest that partners are satisfied with the level of cooperation and that both the Leadership Council and the Safe Start Partnership Center are functioning as expected.

The full report is available from the Research and Evaluation Center upon request.

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