

FAMILY FOCUS EXISTS TO NURTURE CHILDREN AND STRENGTHEN FAMILIES

— Sandra Conrad
sconrad@fvshopper.com

The mission of Family Focus is to promote the well being of children from birth by supporting and strengthening families, to help parents gain the confidence and competence as primary caregivers and educators for their children. The organization provides critical resources and learning opportunities to encourage their healthy development.

Parents are connected to one another in the community to form a supportive structure for the entire family to impact a child's emotional state, the ability to socialize, the capacity to learn and to prepare for school. Family Focus supports children ages 6 through 18 through programs to explore science and technology, engineering and math, as well as sports and cultural activities that encourage self confidence and the ability to create positive relationships. By helping parents and family members to achieve their own personal academic and career goals, the lives of their children are impacted as caregivers gain skills and confidence.



their children are doing much better in school.

Developmental screenings are held to ensure children are reaching important milestones in their lives. Educational workshops and support groups are held for parents. An evidence-based early childhood curriculum is utilized. Parents receive prenatal education and birthing support. Families are taught to set goals. Learning activities are created to promote literacy. Fathers are encouraged to engage.

The Aurora center is located at 550 Second Avenue (630/256-7018). What makes Family Focus unique is that programs are respectful of various cultures, almost all participants in their programs are satisfied with the services they receive and most caregivers overwhelmingly report a better understanding of their child's development and that

The idea of caring for children by strengthening and supporting the family was conceived by founder Bernice Weissbourd, a leading scholar in the field of early childhood development. Family Focus was founded in 1976 when a Bernice and a small staff opened the first center in Evanston, IL. Other agencies sent representatives to study her work that directed national attention on the critical first three years of a child's life and the need to support families. In response to community needs, seven centers were opened in the Chicago area that provided services to over 17,000 parents and their children enrolled in educational programs, outreach, home visits and crisis services during last year.

Research has shown that early childhood experiences, both good and bad, have lifelong effects. When disadvantaged children receive early education, they achieve greater literacy, higher grades, are more likely to graduate from high school, are less likely to commit crime and have fewer teen pregnancies. By age 3, the child's brain has developed to 80% of adult capacity, love and learning are intimately interwoven and the result of parental care, nurturing and stimulating or abusive and neglectful, lasts a lifetime. Positive early experience results in school readiness, academic success and lifetime well being.

Working with families from a position of equality and respect, Family Focus provides the tools and resources needed for them to become self-sufficient, which can affect multiple generations. A welcoming and caring environment allows families to express their concerns and hopes within the context of their cultural heritage, as they are assisted on an individual basis.

Family Focus programs include Art, Drama & Music, Early Childhood Initiative, Reading, involvement of Fathers, Health, Prevention of teen pregnancy, violence and crime and Mental Health. There is a Doula program which provides educational, physical and emotional support to new mothers. Immigrant families are provided bilingual services and assistance with the citizenship process.

If you require the support Family Focus can provide to your family, do not hesitate to call.