

Community Assessment

2017-2018

Report on Focus Groups

First Step Child Care Center, Inc.

Community Strengths Identified by Parents (2018 additions are denoted by RED text)

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|  | **Head Start Children** | **Head Start Families** |
| Mental Health | Elementary schools can provide counseling for students  The Mental Health Specialist  Laynie Foundation-Child Counseling  Governors State University-Family Counseling  Ingalls/St. James Hospitals-inpatient psych services  **Matteson Library has classes on social and cognitive development** | Richton Park police department, church, personal physician  The Mental Health Specialist-training for parents  Laynie Foundation-Adult Counseling  Governors State University-Family Counseling  Ingalls/St. James Hospitals-inpatient psych services  **Matteson Library has classes on social and cognitive development** |
| Disabilities | SPEED Center, pediatrician, various options in neighboring communities  A lot of schools for special services for young children  **SSSRA- summer camps, classes, groups for children w/disabilities**  **Sensory Sensitive hours at Chuck E. Cheese and AMC Theaters**  **Easter Seals serves O-3 population**  **Good Shepherd Center offers trainings, parenting classes, therapy for children** | SPEED Center, personal physician, various organizations in neighboring communities, school districts.  A lot of schools for special services for young children  **SSSRA- summer camps, classes, groups for children w/disabilities**  **Sensory Sensitive hours at Chuck E. Cheese and AMC Theaters**  **Easter Seals serves O-3 population**  **Good Shepherd Center offers trainings, parenting classes, therapy for children** |
| Education | Library, community center, other centers, Head Start, the Education Coordinator’s relationships with local school districts  **Churches offer parent groups**  **201U school district offers parenting classes on understanding common core**  **Area libraries offer great educational activities for both children and adults**  **Tutoring is offered in the community**  **Nursing and health programs are great at Prairie State and South Suburban.** | Library, Community Center, VFW, Prairie State College, Governor’s State University  **Churches offer parent groups**  **Churches offer High Schoolers tutoring**  **201U school district offers parenting classes on understanding common core**  **Prairie State- GED program**  **University Park offers GED trailer at Village Hall**  **Chicago Heights library-GED support**  **Area libraries offer great educational activities for both children and adults** |
| Health | Community Center, parks, (Schools, school nurses, daycares) – provide vision, hearing, dental  **Mobile dentist**  **WIC office does immunizations**  **Various gyms are visible in the community**  **WIC, Planned Parenthood** | Walgreens, Sam’s Club, VFW, parks, church events and Community Center  **Mobile dentist**  **WIC office does immunizations** |
| Nutrition | Community Center and schools  The Nutritionist/consultant made changes to the menu (whole wheat pasta, frozen versus canned vegetables, etc,), advised staff and parents regarding food preparation and choices.  **WIC and Farmer’s Markets** | Community Center, Sam’s Club, grocery stores in neighboring communities have information  The Nutritionist/consultant provided parent training.  After reviewing IHPs the Nutritionist provided resources to families that had a child with low assessment scores.  **Matteson library offers cooking classes**  **Organic produce is being sold at more stores.**  **Food programs which encourage balanced diets are a great start; we need to encourage this type of eating in the home.** |
| Social Services | A large number of child care centers  **CEDA**  **PASS**  **Good congressmen who help**  **Aunt Martha’s**  **Children’s Home & Aid Society**  **Schools and other places work closely with people in need.** | Aunt Martha’s  A large number of child care centers  **CEDA**  **PASS**  **Good congressmen who help** |

Community **Needs** Identified by Parents

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Head Start Children** | **Head Start Families** |
| Mental Health | Professional development for teachers at schools and daycares  Mental health services  **Help for behavioral issues**  **Bereavement services for children**  **Hard to locate mental health services**  **We need information on what is available in the community**  **There is a lack of teachers trained to assist mental health needs or even family members.**  **“In the school systems there should be more educators equipped with the knowledge to help those that are in need.”** | Referral services, resources, and information, parenting classes on subject  Mental health services  **Help for managing behavioral issues**  **Bereavement services for families**  **Parenting classes**  **Hard to locate mental health services**  **We need information on what is available in the community**  **There is a lack of teachers trained to assist mental health needs or even family members** |
| Disabilities | Accessibility at public places  Quicker access to services  **Children’s therapy clinics in closer proximity**  **Transportation in the community that will transport to different locations and times for children with special needs.**  **The center needs to hire aides or a specialist for the children with mental health issues and disabilities.**  **We need more schools for kids with disabilities and more programs to help parents learn how to cope with children with disabilities.**  **There are too many children in the classroom for teachers to focus on children with disabilities.** | Accessibility at public places, knowledge of rights, classes provided that explain the law  **Children’s therapy clinics in closer proximity**  **We need more schools for kids with disabilities and more programs to help parents learn how to cope with children with disabilities.** |
| Education | Professional development for teachers focusing on standards, academic after school programs, Boy and Girl Scouts, timing for programs and activities, recycling info  **More afterschool daycare programs**  **Shortage in schools (not enough schools)**  **“The education system has failed-the start of charter schools, the lack of a vocational high school (not all kids go to college).”**  **We need more services in school for children with special needs**  **“We as a community need to encourage higher levels of education to paint a brighter picture of our future.”**  **“We need more resources for grandparents raising their grandchildren-a support group and education.”** | Prairie State College-assistance with grants and scholarships for working parents, parenting classes, Homework Helpline  **Summer programs for school-age children**  **More afterschool daycare programs**  **Tutoring programs**  **Lifeskills program for young adults after highschool**  **Tax prep classes to teach adults how to do their own taxes**  **Shortage in schools (not enough schools)**  **Parenting education classes needed.** |
| Health | Nurse practitioners/nutritionists come in and teach kids about health and safety in the classrooms  **Pediatric dentists who take the medical card**  **Everything left Matteson-the great urgent/immediate care facilities are in Flossmoor or Frankfort.”**  **We need more facilities that take all insurance plans**  **We need affordable healthcare and doctors’ offices** | Parenting classes that focus on health information from a health professional, resources, pamphlets and information  **Pediatric dentists who take the medical card**  **Everything left Matteson-the great urgent/immediate care facilities are in Flossmoor or Frankfort.”**  **Lack of affordable health insurance**  **We need affordable healthcare and doctors’ offices** |
| Nutrition | Farmer’s market, nutrition focused restaurants, nutritionists come in and talk about food, community garden, health food store  Build a garden  **Not much offered in the community**  **“We have a food desert-all the decent grocery stores have left.”**  **“We need more stores in the community to offer more nutritional foods.” (Recurring theme)** | **\***Parenting classes that focus on nutrition and food, cooking classes, Farmer’s Market, knowledge and resources, health food stores  **(\*Emphasized AGAIN in 2017)**  **Not much offered in the community** |
| Social Services | Counseling facilities, community outreach  Establish relationships between service providers.  There is a need for a clinic, parks and stores  **“We need easier ways to get families connected with the services needed.”**  **We need agencies to advertise what services are available.**  **Afterschool programs and aftercare needed. My neighborhood has no sidewalks and thus children are forced to walk in the streets.**  **Not enough extracurricular activities offered during school breaks.** | Parenting classes, facilities, information, resources  Establish relationships between service providers.  \*There is a need for a clinic, parks and stores  **(\*Emphasized AGAIN in 2017)**  **Parents reported FSS staff as their sole source of assistance.**  **“We need more help for parents to go back to school so they can get better jobs or even make more on their job.”**  **More community involvement with parents and their children.** |

**Focus Group with Institutions in the Community**

Community Strengths Identified by Community Members

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|  | **Head Start Children** | **Head Start Families** |
| Mental Health | No More Cycles Life Coaching  Aunt Martha’s  Rich Township | No More Cycles Life Coaching  Aunt Martha’s  Rich Township |
| Disabilities | Special Service Rec Association (Tinley Park)  **Sertoma (Hearing Services/Support)** | Special Service Rec Association (Tinley Park) |
| Education | Center for Positive Advancement-Student Counseling  Beginnings Pre-school  First Step Child Care Center  Mother Ferguson’s Safe Haven Day Care  Ms. Sheila’s Home Day Care  Red Dragon Martial Arts Academy  South Suburban Christian Academy  Hands of Hope-Tutoring / after care / free lunch for needy children  Steps Unlimited Career Development | Center for Positive Advancement-Student Counseling  Beginnings Pre-school  First Step Child Care Center  Mother Ferguson’s Safe Haven Day Care  Ms. Sheila’s Home Day Care  Red Dragon Martial Arts Academy  South Suburban Christian Academy  Hands of Hope-Tutoring / after care / free lunch for needy children  Steps Unlimited Career Development |
| Health | CAAN Academy of Nursing (Park Forest)  Robert Smith, DDS  A to Z Dentistry  Edwards Chiropractic  Russell Gertsch DDS  Mercado Foot and Ankle Clinic  Pearce Pediatrics  Young Family Dental  Walgreens  **Universal Smiles: refers (in and out) so that families can receive treatment** | CAAN Academy of Nursing (Park Forest)  Robert Smith, DDS  A to Z Dentistry  Edwards Chiropractic  Russell Gertsch DDS  Mercado Foot and Ankle Clinic  Pearce Pediatrics  Young Family Dental  Walgreens |
| Nutrition | Village of Richton Park (entire village) is part of the national Let’s Move Campaign-we have 5 Gold Stars  **WIC-strong in our area** | Village of Richton Park (entire village) is part of the national Let’s Move Campaign-we have 5 Gold Stars |
| Social Services | Starr Care Home Healthcare  Benjamin O. Davis VFW Post 311  Living Hope Outreach International  No More Cycles Life Coaching  Rich Township Food Pantry / Clothing Drives  South Suburban Women’s Shelter  DHS | Starr Care Home Healthcare  Benjamin O. Davis VFW Post 311  Living Hope Outreach International  No More Cycles Life Coaching  Rich Township Food Pantry / Clothing Drives/ Transportation services for seniors  South Suburban Women’s Shelter  DHS  **Senior support programs** |

Community Needs Identified by Community Members

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|  | **Head Start Children** | **Head Start Families** |
| Mental Health | It was the consensus of the committee (once again) that a community hospital would provide requisite services across all areas identified | It was the consensus of the committee (once again) that a community hospital would provide requisite services across all areas identified |
| Disabilities | See notation under Mental Health | See notation under Mental Health |
| Education | None identified | None identified |
| Health | See notation under Mental Health  **Children are missing school because of dental needs** | See notation under Mental Health |
| Nutrition | **More education on healthy living-parks and healthier foods to combat obesity problem.**  **Additional healthy food providers to combat nutritional deficiencies.**  **More affordable food sources for families** | **More education on healthy living-parks and healthier foods to combat obesity problem.**  **Additional healthy food providers to combat nutritional deficiencies.**  **More affordable food sources for families** |
| Social Services | See notation under Mental Health | See notation under Mental Health  **Housing in crisis in the area-higher property taxes without strong homeownership; Sauk Village is largely a rental community now. Surrounding prosperous communities have bloomed while the local communities have deteriorated (the gap has widened).**  **Quality of life issues as smaller stores have disappeared as Walmart came into the area.**  **Better outreach by police departments as distrust has increased.** |

Program Analysis

The parent focus group expressed several new themes this program year. One issue that was cited frequently was scarcity of retail grocery outlets. This community has recently experienced several large food outlets closing, forcing community members to travel many more miles to acquire their basic needs. Another frequently-cited issue not seen as often in previous years is the need for highly educated teachers to address the serious mental health/disability concerns seen in school age populations.

The community focus group, largely comprised of Richton Park Village officials, contractors, and other business owners noted the health access issues as in previous years (including dental services) but also reported the decline of small businesses as affecting quality of life in the community (for the second year in a row). One common thread was a perceived lack of social services of all kinds but most specifically for women and families. However, community officials also have serious concerns about commerce, crime and community relations.

**Community Strengths**

Both focus groups agreed that access to education at all ages and stages was abundant in this area. They identified a variety of services available to families through small businesses in the community. The library was identified once again as a huge asset with its many programs and services.

**Community Needs**

As we observed in previous years, the needs identified by parents were largely focused on immediate, attainable training services for parents and children which would impact health. What was new this year is the response to a variety of stores closing in Matteson. Over and over we heard from families who cited a lack of grocery stores as a primary complaint. They report having to travel well out of the community to find healthy produce.

**Recommendations:**

Based on these findings, First Step Child Care Center will, through the efforts of our Parent, Family & Community Engagement Coordinator, broaden parent training programs that provide information and hands-on techniques to enhance health and wellness practices in the home. While we engaged a nutritionist and mental health consultant for parent training this year, we expect to add additional offerings to provide information and resources to our families. We are currently seeking funding for a comprehensive Parenting Skills program/curricula to present to our parents as well as the community-at-large. Continued effort will be made to establish linkage with existing community resources to support families to enhance wellness of the children we serve.

Based on the goal of empowering families, First Step will continue to identify resources within the surrounding communities to assist parents in achieving their personal goals with regard to education and career enhancement and improve information dissemination to reflect more active and less passive communications. A whole new focus this year will be to find ways to assist our custodial grandparents in the program who are struggling in their efforts to raise their grandchildren. They have expressed a desire for support and thus we will explore how other providers reach out to this unique group to connect them with the resources they need.