

**EVALUATION
OF THE
FAMILIES TOGETHER PROJECT**

Submitted to:

St. Christopher-Ottilie
Services for Children and Families
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March 2001

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families wishes to thank the many individuals who contributed to the Families Together Project. The principles, values, and protocols for case planning in foster care and adoption services that inform the project were first outlined by Sister Mary Paul Janchill, D.S.W., in *Guidelines to Decision-Making in Child Welfare* (The Human Services Workshops, New York, NY 1981).

The Families Together Project was funded from 1997-2000 by the Adoption Opportunities Grant Program, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. We thank ACYF for its willingness to explore the innovative service approaches undertaken by the project to enhance permanency planning for children and families.

Within St. Christopher-Ottolie, Mary Jane Cotter, Assistant Executive Director, Foster Care and Adoption Services, provided primary leadership and direction for the Families Together Project. Carmen Wagner, Director, Brooklyn North, provided project oversight. Jama Jackson and Emily Pardee, Project Coordinators, implemented and followed through on the many elements of the Families Together Project. The Family Group Conference Facilitators – Winnie Dimanche, Shawn Liddell, Sharmeela Mediratta, Yvette Morales and Michelle Scrubb – brought a key practice of the project into reality. Our foster parents trained as Family-to-Family Specialists – Marion Carrington, Lorraine Escalante, Janet Stevens, and Audrey Thompson – gave us their insight and dedication to help the project implement Family-to-Family practice. Lorena Sullivan conducted the Early Intervention Screens of the project children. Benny Burgos designed and perfected the Families Together Project database. Alison Marmolejos helped to develop and implement the project's quality of service assessment. Juana Rodriguez provided the secretarial support without which the project could not have been completed.

We thank the following individuals who provided extensive training and guidance to the Families Together Project staff in order to transmit the project principles and values and develop concurrent planning and family group conferencing skills: Robyn Brown-Manning, Kriya Associates; Nancy Fritsche Eagan, People Potential; Patricia Evans, Department of Family and Children's Services, Santa Clara County, California; Sarah Greenblatt, National Resource Center for Permanency Planning; and Sally Palmer, Ph.D., University School of Social Work in Hamilton, Ontario.

Appreciation for their support and consultative roles goes to Mary Odom, Director, Brooklyn South; Charlotte Torti, Director, Agency Information Management System (AIMS); Chuck Caputo, Director, Quality Improvement; and Madeline Martinez, Administrative Assistant, for all her help processing satisfaction surveys and quality of service assessment forms.

Finally, special thanks go to the caseworkers – Avril Bachelor, Katiusia Brifils, Veronica Cools, Earth Duverny, Michelle Edwards, Linda Jacobs, Doreen Kelly, Jean Lafontant, Victor Luciano, Babu Prince, Nancy Roldan, Titus Stewart, Samantha Tran, Milena Uribe, and Marie Van Alst – and supervisors – Nicole Benjamin, Rory Francis, and Kristen Schultz – who supported this project with their enthusiasm and dedication.

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Attachments

- #1: St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families Foster Care Manual
- #2: Families as Partners in Permanency: A Curriculum for Skills Development
- #3: FTP Research Cases
- #4: List of Families Together Project Staff
- #5: Training Attendance Grid and List of Training Sessions
- #6: Family Group Conference Outline/Family Group Conference Summary
- #7: Family Facilitator Training Materials (including AHA Family Group Decision Making Technical Assistance Notebook)
- #7a: Family to Family Specialist Training Materials
- #8: Summary of the MAPP Training Philosophy and Practices
- #9: Information packets distributed by the Families Together Project
- #10: Early Assessment 0-7 Days with Birth Parents
- #11: Rapid Assessment Questionnaire (0-7 Days/Caseworker and Supervisor)
- #12: UCR Periodic Progress Report
- #13: Early Assessment and Intervention Services
- #14: Caseload Due Dates
- #15: Services and Planning Tracking Sheet
- #16: Satisfaction Surveys and Tracking Sheet
- #17: Goal Duration Report
- #18: SC-O Families Together Project Record Review/Quality of Service Assessment
- #19: Description of Families Together Database
- #20: Families Together Project Outcomes Summary
- #21: Families Together Project Status Report
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BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

St. Christopher-Ottilie Services for Children and Families (SC-O) is a voluntary, not-for-profit human service agency affiliated with Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Brooklyn and the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services as a child caring agency, and accredited since January 1995 with the Council on Accreditation for Services to Families and Children. St. Christopher-Ottilie serves children, families, and individuals in metropolitan New York City who are developmentally disabled, physically and sexually abused, emotionally disturbed, homeless, and abandoned. The agency accepts referrals for placement of children from newborn to 21 years of age, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day.

The Families Together Project (FTP) was conducted in St. Christopher-Ottilie's Brooklyn Foster Care Office, located in the Downtown/Fort Greene neighborhood, a culturally diverse, urban community. The Brooklyn office works with families in seven Brooklyn community districts and serves approximately 600 children each year. The project involved two of nine foster care units in this office. Its 47 families and 82 children comprised approximately one-third of the units' caseload during the time of the project.

The Families Together Project at St. Christopher-Ottilie Services for Children and Families was funded by the Adoption Opportunities Grant Program, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The grant covered the period of 1997 - 2000.

The project evaluation, conducted by Welfare Research, Inc. (WRI), was organized around five areas: Start-up; Staff and Foster Parent Recruitment and Training; Product Development; Participant Outcomes; and Organizational Issues. Evaluation data were collected through a review of reports, training curricula, and participant satisfaction surveys; a review of data from the case files of the project families and the comparison group families; discussions in focus groups; and one-on-one interviews with appropriate St. Christopher-Ottilie staff.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Families Together Project had the following objectives: Empower families to take responsibility for establishing and successfully completing their own service plans; speed family reunification for children and youth who are likely to return to their parents or relatives, with necessary and appropriate services in place; expedite the choice of adoption or guardianship as a permanency planning goal for children who are least likely to return home; increase knowledge and share information about non-adversarial permanency options such as guardianship/custody arrangements, voluntary relinquishment of parental rights, and open adoptions earlier in the planning process; support and develop a cadre of casework staff skilled in Concurrent Permanency Planning and the use of Family Group Conferencing as methods of practice; create a new partnership among and between casework staff, families, and foster parents in the implementation and promotion of accelerated permanency planning; and establish performance standards and outcome measures to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the new service models that would be replicable and usable by both the public and private sectors.

PROJECT STRATEGIES AND DESIGN

The Families Together Project recognized that forging new, inclusive ways for staff to work as partners with foster parents and for both to work as partners with birth parents is at the heart of overcoming barriers to permanency for young children and their families. It explored strategies that emphasize joint

staff and foster parent training, information sharing, building knowledge about legal options, and non-adversarial, participatory methods of decision-making.

Two important strategies were used to advance the project's objectives: Concurrent Permanency Planning and Family Group Conferencing. Concurrent Permanency Planning (CPP) involves developing a case plan that works toward a primary permanency plan, usually returning the child to his or her birth parent, and, at the same time, pursues a second, contingency permanency plan for the child in case the first plan cannot be accomplished. Caseworkers assess early and often whether the parent is making progress toward being ready and able for the child to come home. They discuss time frames and permanency options clearly ("full disclosure") and encourage the early, active involvement of birth parents in the process of planning for their children.

Family Group Conferencing (FGC) consists of setting up and facilitating conferences with the family and extended family members for the purpose of planning for services for families and permanency for children. This method promotes the participation of families in a non-adversarial decision-making process; it is family-centered, family strengths-oriented, culturally relevant, and community-based. It is unique in employing a structure that actually shares power with families so that they can take the lead and make decisions for themselves and their children.

Forty-seven families (with 82 children, 67 of whom were age six and under) were recruited to participate in the Families Together Project. Families were selected as long as at least one child was age six or under at the time of placement into St. Christopher-Ottilie. All of the families received Concurrent Permanency Planning services (referred to as the CPP group); 18 families received CPP services and also participated in Family Group Conferences (referred to as the FGC group). A comparison group of 24 families (with 47 children, 35 of whom were age six and under), matched by date of entry into SC-O and project selection criteria, was identified and tracked.

Regarding characteristics of the families, project and comparison families were comparable in presenting high levels of physical/sexual abuse and drug/alcohol abuse at-risk behaviors. Comparison families were somewhat more likely to present higher levels of mental illness and domestic violence at-risk behaviors. The data suggest that families in both the project group and the comparison group presented similar, significant challenges.

Regarding ethnicity, 52 percent of the CPP birth parents, 61 percent of the FGC birth parents, and 71 percent of comparison group birth parents were African-American; 34 percent of the CPP group, 28 percent of the FGC group, and 25 percent of the comparison group were Latino/a. Individuals who reported themselves as multi-ethnic included seven percent of the CPP group and 11 percent of the FGC group. There were two Caucasians in the CPP group, none in the FGC group, and one in the comparison group.

OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: PERMANENCY, SERVICES, AND SATISFACTION

Children in the project groups tended to have more positive outcomes than children in the comparison group. Children in the CPP and the FGC groups were significantly more likely to have been discharged from foster care, and to have been returned to a parent. A relatively larger percentage of CPP children, after 15 months or more in care, had adoption as a goal (noting, however, that this group had the highest percentage of "no parent available"). Both groups of project children experienced significantly less time in foster care. The financial savings associated with less time in care for CPP children (mean of 76 days

less) was \$2,839 per child and for FGC children (mean of 65 days less) was \$2,428 per child. (For the 28 project children discharged from care, this added up to a total savings over two years of \$74,149.) While in foster care, children in both project groups also were significantly more likely to have had Early Intervention Screenings for developmental delays.

Birth parents in the project groups also tended to have more positive outcomes than birth parents in the comparison group. More of them had their children returned to them, and their children came home more quickly. Both groups of project birth parents were significantly more likely to have participated in the most recent Service Plan Reviews. They were more likely to have received Early Assessments of their strengths and needs, 30-Day Service Plan Reviews, and 60-Day Service Plan Reviews. Birth parents in one or both project groups reported higher or equal satisfaction and knowledge in the majority of elements addressed in Satisfaction Surveys.

Foster parents in the project groups also tended to have more positive outcomes than foster parents in the comparison group. Both groups of project foster parents were significantly more likely to have participated in the most recent Service Plan Review. Foster parents in one or both project groups reported higher or equal satisfaction in the majority of items addressed in Satisfaction Surveys. FGC group foster parents were the most likely to report they felt that the birth parents wanted to be a partner with them.

Staff in the project groups also tended to have more positive outcomes than staff in the comparison group. Staff of both project groups were more successful in locating named fathers and in obtaining children's birth certificates. Project staff members reported higher satisfaction in the majority of items addressed in Satisfaction Surveys.

Unexpected findings included the large percentage of children remaining in foster care in both of the project groups who retained the goal of return to parent after 15 months in foster care; the low percentage of children in the FGC group who, after 15 months in foster care, had adoption as a permanency goal; the relatively small difference among the three groups in time spent in Family Court; the larger percentage of comparison group birth parents who reported the perception that their child's foster parent wanted them (the birth parent) to be a partner in making decisions about their child; and the larger percentage of comparison group foster parents who reported the perception that SC-O staff members wanted them to be a partner in making decisions.

OUTCOMES FOR AGENCY AND CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE AND MANAGEMENT

Incorporating the project's most effective elements into practice throughout St. Christopher-Ottillie was an organizational goal that has been substantially achieved. All of the project staff received Concurrent Permanency Planning training, and a subgroup also received Family Group Conferencing training. The project staff selected critical elements of this training and developed a curriculum, *Families as Partners in Permanency: A Curriculum for Skills Development*, which is now being used to train the rest of the agency's casework staff. In addition, the foster care manual developed by the project is now being used throughout the agency for casework training and practice. The principles and practices of Family-to-Family casework – early engagement of parents, strengths and needs assessments, full disclosure, and concurrent planning – have had an impact on the agency as a whole, and the practice of Family Group Conferencing is being expanded within the Brooklyn office.

For foster parents, St. Christopher-Ottillie replaced its existing training curriculum (FACTS) with the MAPP (Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting) curriculum and began training some foster parents

to become Family-to-Family Specialists to promote working partnerships between birth and foster parents.

An impressive array of documents – including the *St. Christopher-Otilie Services for Children and Families Foster Care Manual* and the *Families as Partners in Permanency: A Curriculum for Skills Development* – were developed by the project, have been integrated into on-going agency practices, and are available for general distribution. An equally impressive array of outcomes-based performance assessment tools and permanency standards and milestones were created by the project. These tools can be grouped into four categories: (1) Case Practice Tools – used by workers to improve their casework; (2) Self-Assessment Tools – used by workers and supervisors to track permanency milestones for individual cases and caseloads; (3) Organizational Management Tools – used by program directors to assess program quality, efficiency, and effectiveness; and (4) Project Management Tools – used by project staff to gather and analyze data on the children and families included in the project. The majority of the materials, tools, and procedures developed by the project have been integrated fully or partially into SC-O's routine foster care case management and data collection practices.

Over the course of the project, project staff met with many individuals and organizations to present the Families Together Project and disseminate information about the project's service models. Broad dissemination of project documents and materials has been, and will continue to be, facilitated by a variety of agencies, including the New York City Administration for Children's Services Satterwhite Training Academy, the Human Services Workshops, the National Resource Center for Permanency Planning at Hunter College School of Social Work, and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Furthermore, project staff and WRI are exploring the possibility of disseminating both the curriculum and the manual over the CONNECTIONS system (the computer network of New York State's Office of Children and Family Services) as well as the worldwide web.

I. BACKGROUND AND START-UP

A. Background

St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families (SC-O) is a voluntary, not-for-profit human service agency affiliated with Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Brooklyn and the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services as a child caring agency, and accredited since January 1995 with the Council on Accreditation for Services to Families and Children.

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The Families Together Project at St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families was funded by the Adoption Opportunities Grant Program, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The grant covered the period of 1997 - 2000.

This evaluation, conducted by Welfare Research, Inc. (WRI), is organized around five areas that lend themselves to analysis and evaluation. The areas include:

- Start-up
- Staff and Foster Parent Recruitment and Training
- Product Development
- Participant Outcomes
- Organizational Issues

For each of these areas, a series of questions was developed. Answers to these questions form the basis for the final evaluation of the project and are provided as findings within each chapter. Evaluation data were collected through a review of reports, training curricula, and participant satisfaction surveys; a review of data from the case files of the project families and the comparison group families; discussions in focus groups; and one-on-one interviews with appropriate St. Christopher-Ottolie staff.

1. Values and Objectives of the Project

The values held by St. Christopher-Ottillie were reflected and developed in the Families Together Project: family empowerment, the foster care team, the health and safety of children as paramount, and expedited permanency for children and families. To put these values into practice, the Families Together Project had the following objectives:

1. Empower families to take responsibility for establishing and successfully completing their own service plans.
2. Speed family reunification for children and youth who are likely to return to their parents or relatives, with necessary and appropriate services in place.
3. Expedite the choice of adoption or guardianship as a permanency planning goal for children who are least likely to return home.
4. Increase knowledge and share information about non-adversarial permanency options such as guardianship/custody arrangements, voluntary relinquishment of parental rights, and open adoptions earlier in the planning process.
5. Support and develop a cadre of casework staff skilled in Concurrent Permanency Planning (CPP) and the use of Family Group Conferencing (FGC) as methods of practice.
6. Create a new partnership among and between casework staff, families, and foster parents in the implementation and promotion of accelerated permanency planning.
7. Establish performance standards and outcome measures to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the new service models that would be replicable and usable by both the public and private sectors.

2. Strategies of the Project

The Families Together Project recognized that forging new, inclusive ways for staff to work as partners with foster parents and for both to work as partners with birth parents is at the heart of overcoming barriers to permanency for young children and their families. It explored strategies that emphasize joint staff and foster parent training, information sharing, building knowledge about legal options, and non-adversarial, participatory methods of decision-making.

Two important strategies used to advance the project's objectives were Concurrent Permanency Planning and the Family Group Conference. Concurrent Permanency Planning involves developing a case plan that works toward a primary permanency plan, usually returning the child to his or her birth parent, and, at the same time, pursues a second, contingency permanency plan for the child in case the first plan cannot be accomplished. Caseworkers must assess early and often whether the parent is making progress toward being ready and able for the child to come home. They must discuss time frames and permanency options clearly ("full disclosure") and encourage the early, active involvement of birth parents in the process of planning for their children. With this approach, the caseworker informs parents clearly about what work needs to be accomplished, the time frames that apply, and the possible outcomes.

The second strategy, Family Group Conferencing, was pioneered in New Zealand as a core method of

child protective intervention. This method promotes the participation of families in a non-adversarial decision-making process; it is family-centered, family strengths-oriented, culturally relevant, and community-based. It is unique in employing a structure that actually shares power with families so that they can take the lead and make decisions for themselves and their children.

Family Group Conferencing consists of setting up and facilitating conferences with the family and extended family members for the purpose of planning for services for families and permanency for children. The FGC approach emphasizes outreach to family members to encourage and facilitate their attendance at the conference; this outreach seeks to recognize, validate, and possibly even strengthen family bonds. It also supports an FGC goal of bringing in the largest possible base of family knowledge and resources. At the Family Group Conference, family members and professional staff exchange information about family strengths, family needs, the foster care system, family court, and issues specific to the children in care. The family then has the opportunity to discuss everything privately and to develop the permanency and service plan that they believe will best meet the children's and family's needs. The goal of using the Family Group Conference method is to expedite permanency for children in foster care by:

- Increasing family participation in permanency plans that they create;
- Increasing caseworker knowledge of family members who may be resources for children;
- Increasing caseworker knowledge of family strengths and resources;
- Increasing family knowledge of foster care and family court, especially time limits for permanency planning.

B. Project Start-up

This evaluation identified the following findings related to the start-up of the Families Together Project.

1. Selection of Project Families

Forty-seven families (with 82 children, 67 of whom were age six and under) were recruited to participate in the Families Together Project. Families were selected as long as at least one child was age six or under at the time of placement into St. Christopher-Ottolie. All of the families received Concurrent Permanency Planning services (referred to as the CPP group); 18 families received CPP services and also participated in Family Group Conferences (referred to as the FGC group).

The project had planned to enroll 50 families. The shortfall is attributable to several factors. The primary factor contributing to the shortfall was the overall reduction in the number of children coming into St. Christopher-Ottolie during the project time period. Part of this reduction was due to the citywide decline in children entering foster care that began in 1997. Placements fell by five percent in 1997-98, 15 percent in 1998-99, and another 10 percent in 1999-2000. Referrals and placements at St. Christopher-Ottolie fell by similar amounts during these years. SC-O placements were further reduced due to a change in the city's placement policy in early 2000 to a more neighborhood-based foster care system. St. Christopher-Ottolie found itself initially unable to meet the need of the city's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) for foster homes matched both by community district and the children's specific needs. Thus foster home placements at St. Christopher-Ottolie were down by nearly 30 percent during 2000.

Specifically, placements coming into the SC-O Brooklyn office, where the Families Together Project was being implemented, were reduced (primarily) as follows: in 1997, a 26 percent reduction from the

previous year; in 1998, a 12 percent increase, but still down 17 percent from 1996, the year used to plan for the project; in 1999, a 26 percent increase (55 percent of the project cases were recruited to the project that year); and in 2000, a 33 percent reduction.

The Families Together Project had been designed to enroll 10 families during April - September 1998, 20 families during October 1998 - March 1999 and 20 more April - September 1999. With fewer and fewer children entering foster care, the project was unable to meet any of these targets and needed to extend the enrollment period for over eight months to capture as many cases as it did.

A second, important factor was the significant number of cases (45) initially assigned to the Families Together Project that subsequently were removed. In the majority of cases, the child was discharged in less than 30 days (20 cases), in 30-60 days (4 cases), or in 60-90 days (1 case) before the family could give consent to be in the project or receive significant FTP services. Eight families invited to participate in the project refused (citing reasons such as reluctance to do more than required, concern about participating in a research project, and difficulties in cooperating in the conference scheduling efforts). In a very few instances, early in the project, cases were removed from participating in the Families Together Project when it became apparent that the severity of the birth parent's condition – mental illness, mental disability, physical absence, or language barrier – precluded his or her ability to participate in the program. In four cases planning was transferred to another agency and in two cases it was determined that the case planning responsibilities were with another agency.

Intake was closed on June 15, 2000 so that participating families would receive at least five months of project activity. A list of the participating families (with pseudonyms replacing actual names for confidentiality purposes) is included as Attachment #3.

2. Comparison Group Families

A comparison group of 24 families (with 47 children, 35 of whom were age six and under), matched by date of entry into SC-O and project selection criteria was identified and tracked. When reviewed after selection, they proved to be comparable in terms of demographics, service status, and services needed.

a. Initial Selection Process

On February 8, 2000, the process began to select the initial 22 cases comprising the comparison group (88% of the comparison group cases were selected because 86% of the FTP cases had been recruited at this point in time). The SC-O Agency Information Management System (AIMS) unit identified all cases assigned to the Brooklyn office from July 1, 1998 through December 31, 1999. Cases already participating in the Families Together Project were removed from the list. From the remaining cases, FTP staff identified 200 cases that met the project criteria (child six years of age or younger, and entering care during this time period). From these, 22 were selected based on a random selection basis (every eighth case).

b. Additional Selection Process

When the selection of cases for the project closed in June, 2000, the final cases for the comparison group were selected randomly from cases that met the project criteria, had entered the agency since January 1, 2000, and were assigned to non-project units. Several of the comparison group cases were removed for the following reasons: (1) they closed in under 60 days (such cases had been removed from the project groups), (2) they were in a unit specializing in short-term placements and so were not appropriate for

comparison, and (3) to ensure matching by intake dates. Additional cases, matched by intake dates and project selection criteria, were selected randomly to complete the comparison group.

3. Characteristics of Participant Families

To be selected for participation in the Families Together Project, at least one child in the family had to be six years of age or less at intake (all participating families had at least one such child, as shown in Attachment #3). Hence, it is not surprising that the groups varied on some demographic variables, as shown below.

a. Family Size and Foster Care Placement

	CPP	FGC	Comparison
Families with only one child	72%	33%	58%
Kinship foster care placements	11%	47%	55%
Average number of children in family	1.5	2.1	2.0

According to the Project Director, the comparison group’s relatively high use of kinship foster care homes (55%) was influenced by St. Christopher-Otilie’s procedure for processing “expedited kinship foster care” cases. These cases were not given to the two FTP units since they typically come into St. Christopher-Otilie with kinship family care as part of a plan already developed with the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS). The CPP group’s low use of kinship foster care homes (11%) reflects the nine children in this group with absent parents, none of whom was placed in kinship foster care.

b. Presenting Problems

Over the course of the Families Together Project, families were recruited for participation regardless of the complexity of their problems, with the caveat that, in the start-up stage of the project, a small number of families (three) were excluded by staff who regarded the level of dysfunctionality of the birth parent as precluding meaningful participation. The absence of a birth parent to participate in the CPP group was initially considered problematic, but such families eventually comprised a significant portion of the CPP group. Both project families and comparison group families subsequently were examined to determine the following at-risk behaviors (note that percentages do not sum to 100% due to instances of multiple problem behaviors occurring within some families):

	Project Families	Comparison Families
Abuse (not neglect or voluntary placement)	13%	13%
Drug/alcohol abuse	70%	67%
Mental illness	15%	21%
Domestic violence	6%	13%

As shown in the data, project and comparison families were comparable in presenting high levels of physical/sexual abuse and drug/alcohol abuse at-risk behaviors. Comparison families were somewhat more likely to present higher levels of mental illness and domestic violence at-risk behaviors. [Note: Due to the smaller number of cases in the comparison group (24) compared to the project group (47), a difference of a single family having a problem with mental illness or domestic violence made a

significant percentage difference.] These data suggest that families in both the project group and the comparison group presented similar, significant challenges.

c. Ethnicity

Birth parents in both the CPP group and the FGC group were similar to the ethnic profile of all St. Christopher-Ottilie families. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of all St. Christopher-Ottilie parents are African-American, as were 52 percent of the CPP birth parents and 61 percent of the FGC birth parents. Although randomly selected, a significantly larger percentage (71%) of comparison group birth parents were African-American. One-third (33%) of all St. Christopher-Ottilie parents are Latino/a, as were one-third (34%) of the CPP group, compared with 28 percent of the FGC group and 25 percent of the comparison group. Individuals who reported themselves as multi-ethnic included seven percent of the CPP group and 11 percent of the FGC group. There were two Caucasians in the CPP group, none in the FGC group, and one in the comparison group.

4. Characteristics of Participant Foster Parents

The comparison group foster parents were significantly more likely to have been foster parents at St. Christopher-Ottilie for five years or more (44%, compared with 26% of the CPP foster parents and 18% of the FGC foster parents). Equal percentages of all three foster parent groups reported more than one foster child currently in their home (54% of CPP foster parents, 56% of FGC foster parents, and 56% of comparison foster parents). With regard to type of foster parent, the majority (92%) of the CPP foster parents were regular foster parents (two were kinship foster parents). The majority (75%) of FGC foster parents also were regular foster parents (four were kinship foster parents). The majority (56%) of the comparison foster parents were regular foster parents, and 44 percent were kinship foster parents.

II. STAFF AND FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

A. Background

To support caseworkers with the skills and practices that enable them to engage families in the permanency planning process as early as possible, the Families Together Project directed attention and resources to developing training curricula, conducting training, and using innovative, but replicable, program supports. One of the objectives of the project was to support and develop a cadre of casework staff skilled in Concurrent Permanency Planning (CPP) and the use of Family Group Conferencing (FGC) as methods of practice.

Integral to the approach of the Families Together Project was the development of positive relationships between birth parents and foster parents. In addition to receiving the agency's comprehensive foster parent training, FTP foster parents also took part in focus groups, which were held to solicit suggestions to improve the project. The role of Family-to-Family Specialist (an experienced foster parent) grew out of the focus groups and was added to the project.

This evaluation identified the following topics related to recruitment and training for the Families Together Project. Findings were obtained through a review of written materials and through one-on-one interviews with appropriate St. Christopher-Ottolie (SC-O) staff.

B. Staff Recruitment and Training Activities

1. Project Staff: Ethnicity and Language

Staff members of the Families Together Project closely reflected the ethnicity of participating children and families, with a slightly smaller percentage of Latino(a) staff and slightly larger percentage of White staff than the client population. Thirteen (39%) staff members were African-American, and an additional six (18%) were Caribbean-American (compared with 57% of SC-O families who were African-American or Caribbean-American); six (18%) were Euro-American (compared with 7% of SC-O families who were Euro-American); and six (18%) were Latino(a)-American (compared with 33% of SC-O families who were Latino(a)-American); one was Asian-American. Of the five Family Facilitators (experienced social workers), two were African-American, one was Caribbean-American, one was Latina-American, and one was Indian-American. See Section IV, Participant Outcomes, for more information on ethnicity of project families.

In addition to speaking English, eight (24%) FTP staff members spoke Spanish, one spoke Cantonese, and two spoke French/Creole. Two of the Family Facilitators spoke Spanish, and one spoke French and Creole. Among the project families, 15 percent of the birth families were primarily Spanish-speaking and 83 percent were primarily English-speaking. In two percent of the cases, the parent's language was not recorded.

A complete list of FTP staff and their ethnicity and language spoken is included in Attachment #4.

2. Summary of Training Activities

a. Training in Concurrent Permanency Planning and Family Group Conferences

All FTP staff received Concurrent Permanency Planning training; a subgroup also received Family Group Conferencing training.

Beginning in March 1998, and continuing through January 1999, project staff participated in ongoing training provided by child welfare trainers Sarah Greenblatt, Gary Anderson, Charlotte Torti, Nancy Fritsche-Eagan, Jama Gibbs Jackson, Robyn Brown-Manning, Sally Palmer, Deborah Adamy, and Patricia Evans. Much of the training was coordinated by the National Resource Center on Permanency Planning (NRCPP). The training emphasized the identification of, and building upon, family strengths; the importance of responding to children's feelings (including non-verbal methods); and methods of providing information to families and responding effectively to a parent's request for help.

A training attendance grid displaying the training provided to each FTP staff person and a list of training sessions showing the topics, dates, names of the trainers, and number of attendees is included in Attachment #5.

b. Training-Related Activities

In addition to the project-specific training referenced above and presented in Attachment #5, the following additional training-related activities occurred throughout the project, as delineated in the project's quarterly reports to St. Christopher-Otilie's grants officer at the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

1/1/98 – 3/31/98

- Forty Brooklyn Foster Care Office staff, including caseworkers, supervisors, and homefinders, attended a project orientation session.
- Three trainings for project staff were held. Ten caseworkers and two supervisors were trained in FTP philosophy and program design, as well as practice strategies of accelerated permanency planning, Family Group Conferencing, and early intervention and assessment.
- Orientation and training on family group decision-making theory and practice was provided to Family Facilitators.

4/1/98 – 6/30/98

- Project staff attended the Human Services Workshop's city-wide training on accelerated permanency planning.
- Family Facilitators received four training sessions from NRCPP staff on Family Group Conferencing, including engagement of families, steps and stages of Family Group Conferencing, developing genograms and ecomaps, and obtaining consent to participate in service and evaluation.
- Family Facilitators and Project Coordinator attended a two-day workshop entitled "Just Therapy: Family Therapy and Social Justice" sponsored by a group of local agencies including NRCPP. The presenters were from the Family Centre in Wellington, New Zealand.

9/30/98 – 12/31/98

- Weekly meetings with NRCPP Project Coordinator/Trainer took place.
- Project Coordinator presented Families Together Project concepts to foster parents who were prospective Family-to-Family Specialists on October 14 and November 11, 1998.
- Family-to-Family methods were presented to prospective Family-to-Family Specialists on November 14, 1998.

1/1/99 – 3/31/99

- Project Coordinator attended Children's Bureau Grantees meeting on March 1-2, 1999.
- Weekly meetings with NRCPP Project Coordinator/Trainer took place.
- NRCPP Project Coordinator Trainer provided training for a new Family Facilitator on February 8, 1999.
- Project Coordinator and caseworker attended workshop entitled "Casework in a Concurrent Permanency Planning Environment" offered by the Leake and Watts Drug-Exposed Infant Project (NRCPP, with trainer Robyn Brown-Manning) on March 23, 1999.
- Project Coordinator attended training entitled "Utilizing the Family-to-Family Model in Concurrent Permanency Planning" offered by Leake and Watts Drug-Exposed Infant Project (Elwyn, Inc., Heidi Becker-Share, trainer).

4/1/99 – 6/30/99

- A Family Facilitator attended one-day training entitled "Family Group Decision-Making" held on June 4, 1999, sponsored by the Human Services Workshops and the NRCPP (Robyn Brown-Manning, trainer).
- In-house trainers provided training in Microsoft Access to Project Coordinator and secretary.

7/1/99 – 9/30/99

- New Family Facilitators received internal training, reviewed previous taped videos of conferences, read Family Group Decision Making Technical Assistance Notebook, reviewed materials with the interim Coordinator, and observed a Family Group Conference.
- Monthly meetings with Family-to-Family Specialists, Project Coordinator, and Project Director took place.
- In-house trainers provided training in Microsoft Access to Project Supervisor and Project Director.

10/1/99 – 3/31/00

- Project Coordinator attended Sixth National Child Welfare Conference (March 28-31, 2000).
- Monthly meetings with Family-to-Family Specialists, Project Coordinator, and Director took place.
- New foster parents trained as Family-to-Family Specialists.
- Training in Microsoft Access and Families Together Database provided to Project Coordinator.

4/1/00 – 9/29/00

- Monthly meetings with Family-to-Family Specialists and Project Coordinator took place.

- Project Coordinator presented the project's Family Group Conferencing model as part of a panel at New York State Office of Children and Family Services Regional Conference entitled "Promoting Permanency Options" on June 9, 2000. The conference was practice oriented and targeted to line workers and supervisors.

Subsequent to the closing of the Families Together Project, the Project Coordinator was a member of a panel on "Case Practice and Case Management Strategies to Expedite Permanency" at the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) STAR (Safe and Timely Adoptions and Reunifications) Program Conference on October 24, 2000. The conference, which targeted agency directors, supervisors, and information managers, provided training on how the city was planning to measure, evaluate, report on, and compare agencies on key performance criteria.

c. Foster Care Manual

The foster care manual is a major product of the Families Together Project (see Section III, Product Development, for more information). The manual was distributed to all SC-O casework staff in August 2000, and it is referenced throughout the 13-session training given to new caseworkers. Copies are kept at caseworkers' and supervisors' desks and are used as a reference tool during regular casework. Additional copies are available and are given to new staff when hired.

A copy of the *St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families Foster Care Manual* is included in Attachment #1.

3. Recruitment and Hiring of Family Facilitators

As noted above, a subgroup of FTP staff who received Concurrent Permanency Planning training also received Family Group Conferencing training. This group included one supervisor, six caseworkers, and four on-call Family Facilitators.

Four Family Facilitators were hired in March 1998 and trained in April 1998. As reported in the 4/1/98 – 6/30/98 quarterly report, a decision was made to limit the number of Family Facilitators to four rather than seven. This decision was based on the premise that the project would be enhanced by a smaller number of facilitators with greater experience in working with a larger number of families. When one resigned at the end of 1999, an experienced SC-O caseworker who had worked in Family Group Conferencing was hired to fill the vacancy.

Family Facilitators had primary responsibilities for convening, facilitating, and recording the proceedings from Family Group Conferences. Once birth parents consented to participate in a Family Group Conference, the Family Facilitator contacted them to further explain the process and to gather names, addresses, and telephone numbers of those individuals (family members and significant others) whom the birth parents wanted to attend the Family Group Conference.

Family Facilitators also contacted the foster parents, the child (if 10 years of age or older), the ACS worker, and the law guardian to seek their participation in the Family Group Conference. Logistics, such as ordering a culturally appropriate meal, arranging for transportation, and making arrangements for participation (letters, reports, telephone contacts) by invitees unable to attend the conference, were also handled by the Family Facilitators. Finally, Family Facilitators were responsible for writing reports based on the Family Group Conference and distributing copies to all relevant parties.

The FGC training materials, including the Family Group Conference Outline (used by the FGC facilitators) and the Family Group Conference Summary (sent to FGC participants) are included in Attachment #6. The Family Facilitator Training Materials (including the American Humane Association's Group Decision Making Technical Assistance Notebook, which was used for the training) are included in Attachment #7.

4. Training of Program Managers and Supervisors

Three categories of performance management tools – case practice tools, self-assessment tools, and organizational management tools – were created by the Families Together Project. These tools, as well as project management tools, are presented in detail in Section III, Product Development. In October and November 2000, the Goal Duration Report was used for the entire SC-O caseload of approximately 2,100 children. The AIMS Director and an Assistant Executive Director met with all 31 of the agency's Program Directors and their supervisors to review this report and their cases' performance related to ASFA milestones. Two other management tools – Caseload Due Dates and the Services and Planning Tracking Sheet – were loaded into supervisors' and caseworkers' personal computers, and these staff were trained in their use.

Copies of the Caseload Due Dates and the Services and Planning Tracking Sheet are included in Attachment #14 and Attachment #15, respectively. A copy of the Goal Duration Report is included in Attachment #17.

5. Training in Project Curriculum

The training curriculum was another major product of the project (see Section III, Product Development, for more information). Human Services Workshops, which provides training to service providers in New York City, used the FTP curriculum to train 50 participants from foster care agencies throughout New York City, including St. Christopher-Ottillie, on February 9, 2001. Participants responded very positively to the training, which was considered as a pilot test of the curriculum; project staff will make adjustments to the curriculum based on recommendations from the trainers and participants.

St. Christopher-Ottillie's training department will provide training in-house for SCO staff using the curriculum beginning in March 2001. These trainings will be provided monthly at several sites within the agency and will continue until all program staff (caseworkers and supervisors) have been trained. The curriculum will also be added to the core training given to new workers.

Families as Partners in Permanency: A Curriculum for Skills Development is included in Attachment #2.

C. Training for Foster Parents

1. Curriculum

When the project began, St. Christopher-Ottillie was using a foster parent training curriculum called FACTS (Foster and Adoptive Certification Training System). In July 1999, the agency instituted MAPP (Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting) training for all new foster parents. MAPP training, which is more comprehensive than most other training programs, emphasizes the importance of partnership among birth parents, foster parents, and caseworkers, and includes role-playing and interactive exercises.

A video produced by (and available from) the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), entitled "Families Forever," has been added to the MAPP training sessions. In addition, staff presented information about the Families Together Project at all foster parent certification training sessions held while the project was ongoing.

A summary of the MAPP training philosophy and practices is included in Attachment #8.

2. Focus Groups

Suggestions for improving the Families Together Project were solicited from foster parents on an ongoing basis. For example, an orientation meeting for foster parents was held in May 1998 with 13 foster parents, three project staff, and trainer Sarah Greenblatt in attendance. Suggestions from the foster parents for improving the project included the following: Training should be offered to birth parents and foster parents together; foster parents and birth parents need clearer explanations of each other's roles; foster parents would like more feedback about permanency planning for children in their homes; birth parents should be given clearer explanations of what is expected from them, particularly in relation to the importance of visits; birth parents need feedback on how the child feels when the birth parent does not show up for a visit; adoptions should be more open; and more training is needed on how to communicate with birth parents.

Another meeting with foster parents (17 attendees) and FTP staff (11 attendees) was held in November 1998. Suggestions and issues which emerged from that meeting included the following: There should be an "open door" between birth parents and foster parents; sometimes a time limit is not enough to motivate birth parents to make the changes they need to make to take care of their children; some children should not go back to their parents; foster parents should be matched with other foster parents who live in the same neighborhoods so they can share information and activities such as baby-sitting; and the rights of grandparents when a child is being adopted by a foster parent should be clarified.

3. Recruitment and Training of Family-to-Family Specialists

As a result of the focus groups' suggestions, the position of on-call Family-to-Family Specialist was added to the project. The Family-to-Family Specialist is an experienced foster parent who facilitates the first meeting between birth parents and the foster parent caring for newly placed children and serves as the bridge person, mentor, translator, and natural helper, offering practical advice and help in building a caring relationship among families. The Specialist targets intensive help to the birth family and the foster family in the first week of a child's placement but is available throughout the child's placement and post-placement.

Four foster parents were recruited and trained to become Family-to-Family Specialists. Training materials include a brief description of the Families Together Project; a Family-to-Family Specialist's job description; and articles on shared decision-making and partnership building. Copies of these materials are included in Attachment #7a.

The Family-to-Family Specialists were assigned FTP cases for which they prepared and facilitated initial meetings between the birth parents and foster parents. Each Family-to-Family Specialist also worked approximately six hours a week in the SC-O visiting room supervising and giving general assistance with visitations. In addition they spent four to five hours each month in activities such as assisting with holiday activities, assisting in training new foster parents, and recruiting new foster parents through community forums.

On November 16, 2000, a focus group was held with the four Specialists to solicit their assessment of the training they had received. The consensus was that their training, conducted primarily on a one-on-one basis and focused on individual cases, was effective and appropriate. To incorporate Family-to-Family methods into training for all foster parents, they suggested assigning a Specialist to a new foster parent before the first visit with the birth parent, to help the foster parent learn Family-to-Family concepts and methods from the start. In the third year of the project, the Family-to-Family Specialists re-started a foster parent association within St. Christopher-Otilie's Brooklyn office. They elected officers and are now holding monthly meetings. The Family-to-Family Specialists decorate the Visitation Area on a monthly basis to create and maintain a friendly and nurturing environment conducive to positive visitations.

III. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

The Families Together Project created a number of products associated with various aspects of the project. These include a foster care manual, training materials, information packets, and performance assessment and management tools. This section describes the products, their design and intended use, their integration into agency practice, and their dissemination.

A. Products

1. Foster Care Manual

The *St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families Foster Care Manual* is a major product of the Families Together Project.

In the spring of 1999, three focus groups consisting of St. Christopher-Ottolie (SC-O) caseworkers, homefinders, and supervisors were convened to assist Welfare Research, Inc. (WRI) staff in the development of the manual. The three different groups addressed placement and homefinding on April 28; assessment and working with families on May 10; and providing services to families and building community linkages on May 17. The input of these participants was invaluable; they also provided comments on the manual draft as it was being developed.

The agency viewed the manual as a major step in bridging the permanency planning information gap experienced by participants in the case planning process. The manual provides information on placement, early assessment and intervention, casework contacts and ongoing assessment, planning for permanency, linking families with services, homefinding, protecting children in foster care, movement of children in care, discharge, and other factors such as cultural and religious issues, school issues, developmental issues, and working with children preparing for adoption and independent living. The manual highlights developments related to the Families Together Project and reflects recent legislation (e.g., Adoption and Safe Families Act). It also includes selected resource lists for caseworkers and a section entitled "Taking Care of You" which addresses stresses related to casework and creative ways of coping with stress.

The manual was distributed to all SC-O casework staff in August 2000 and is referenced throughout the 13-session training given to new caseworkers. Copies are kept at caseworkers' and supervisors' desks and are used as a reference tool during regular casework. Additional copies are available and are given to new staff when hired.

A copy of the manual is included in Attachment #1.

2. Training Curriculum

In addition to the training provided at the beginning of the project – Concurrent Permanency Planning, Family Group Conferencing, and Family Facilitator Training – a training curriculum that reflects the goals and strategies of the project was developed in the final year of funding. Entitled *Families as Partners in Permanency: A Curriculum for Skills Development*, the curriculum introduces skills for (1) engaging families early in the placement process, and (2) working in partnership with families to plan for permanency, particularly through case conferences.

The curriculum comprises two parts: Part 1, Engaging Families Early, and Part 2, Planning for Permanency. In addition to handouts, Part 1 contains a role-play exercise with three roles (birth mother, foster mother, and caseworker), and Part 2 contains a case conference exercise, which builds on the role-play of Part 1. Participants are asked questions concerning preparation and handling of issues in a case conference.

A copy of the curriculum is included in Attachment #2.

3. Information Packets

In early 1998, a series of focus groups was held with birth parents who expressed anger about their initial encounters with caseworkers from St. Christopher-Ottolie and the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). Parents said that the pain of having their child removed was compounded by caseworkers who were disrespectful and who did not tell them why their children were removed or how to arrange to see their children.

As a result, improving the ability of caseworkers to provide "Early Engagement and Assessment Services" became a priority for the project. Specific materials and tools were developed to assist birth parents and to guide caseworkers in the project:

- A wallet-size Help Card listing the name and telephone number of their primary SC-O caseworker, SC-O's 24-Hour Hotline, the ACS case manager, the ACS Office of Advocacy Parents' and Children's Rights Units, emergency service numbers, and other Helpline resources. FTP caseworkers provided every parent with the card at the point of initial contact.
- The *Welcome to St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families Handbook* and a *St. Christopher-Ottolie Parents' Handbook*. Developed as communication and engagement tools, these handbooks focus attention on the reasons for placement and give concrete, practical advice to parents or caregivers about their role in case planning and about their rights in working with SC-O and ACS. Staff are trained to welcome parents with these messages: *You are not alone; many people are ready to help you. You remain the most important person in your child's life. You and your child deserve help and support, and together we can make a difference.*

Information packets containing the Welcome Handbook, the Parents' Handbook, the wallet card, and a Families Together Project brochure were distributed to all project families, caseworkers, and supervisors in October 1998. The information packets are now used as part of regular foster care casework practice throughout the agency.

Copies of the information packets are included in Attachment #9.

4. Performance Management Tools

In addition to the manual, the curriculum, and the information packet, the Families Together Project created a number of outcomes-based performance assessment tools to track progress on performance standards and to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the new service models. These "user-friendly" tools are available for replication and use in the public and private sectors.

These tools can be grouped into four categories and are briefly described below.

a. Case Practice Tools

- Early Assessment Form
- Rapid Assessment Questionnaire
- UCR Periodic Progress Report
- Early Assessment and Intervention Services Chart
- Family Group Conference Outline and Report Summary

(1) Early Assessment Form

An Early Assessment Form was created specifically for the Families Together Project. Building on an existing form collecting information on the medical history of the child (prenatal care, perinatal care, feeding, development, illnesses, behavior problems, and social environment) and medical information about the birth parents, the Early Assessment Form collects information on the birth family, family resources, and community/agency involvement. Family information includes, but is not limited to, items such as birth parents' demographics and sources of income; child's school, teacher, and reason for placement; names of family resources; other agencies with which the family is involved; and a section for discussion with the parents. The questions in the parental discussion section are designed to elicit parental views on why the child is coming into care, to reveal whether the family has had previous experience with ACS, and to identify the initial planning goals and service needs.

The Early Assessment Form is filled out by an Early Assessment Worker within seven days of placement. Additional forms to be completed with the birth parent (if applicable) include a designation of religious preference for the child, the mother's statement of paternity, the child's/family medical history, and medical consent.

A copy of the Early Assessment Form is included in Attachment #10.

(2) Rapid Assessment Questionnaire

The Rapid Assessment Questionnaire was developed by the FTP staff as a checklist that the caseworker and supervisor can use to ensure that required information has been provided or obtained in a timely fashion (within seven days of the child's placement in foster care). This tool was designed to help organize information and to assess and review with a supervisor so that next steps can be planned.

Parental information includes items such as whether a wallet card and the Parents' Handbook were provided and whether signed medical consent and designation of religious preference were obtained. Visitations are recorded and planned. Parental priority service needs/action plans (e.g., substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, and child abuse) are also identified.

Child information includes items such as obtaining immunization records and medical history; arranging medical exams; and checking special/exceptional rate eligibility. Child priority service needs/action plans (e.g., mental health, developmental delay, special medical needs, and educational needs) are also identified.

Resource (foster) parent information includes number of children and adults in the home; pre-service and special rate training hours; current on-site observation, medical information, and criminal background statement; State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) clearances for all adults; and the name of a back-up babysitter.

SC-O caseworker information includes knowledge of required court actions in neglect/abuse proceedings; possession of a copy of the Voluntary Placement Agreement (if voluntary placement); and the expedited 24-hour home study and local clearance if the home is an approved kinship home.

A copy of the Rapid Assessment Questionnaire is included in Attachment #11. It is also included in the *St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families Foster Care Manual*.

(3) UCR Periodic Progress Report

Created by FTP staff as a tool that complements the statewide required Uniform Case Record, the UCR Periodic Progress Report is designed to help families and their case planner and case manager document progress toward family reunification from the time a child is placed in foster care. The UCR Periodic Progress Report contains three planning indicator sections. The first two sections – Parent Involvement (e.g., alcohol or drug use, incidents of domestic violence in the household, acknowledgement of responsibilities) and Child (e.g., response to birth parents, behavior in foster care, physical health and development) – are filled in by the caseworker and/or supervisor. The third section – Visits – (e.g., number of visits by the caseworker and foster parent willingness to interact with the birth parents) is filled in by the birth parents and allows them to assess the caseworker and the foster parent.

The data elements in the UCR Periodic Progress Report are keyed to the statewide UCR Risk Assessment Scales. The scales range from 0 to 4, with 4 representing a significant problem. Meetings are to be held with families at placement, and subsequently at two months, six months, and nine months to discuss their progress. Frequent ratings of 3 or 4 over time show a lack of progress and should trigger a reconsideration of the service plan and permanency planning goal.

A copy of the UCR Periodic Progress Report is included in Attachment #12. . It is also included in the *St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families Foster Care Manual*.

(4) Early Assessment and Intervention Services Chart

The Early Assessment and Intervention Services chart was developed as a guide for staff regarding casework activities, desired outcomes, and tools to be used. It deals in detail with the first 90 days of a case. The Early Assessment and Intervention Services chart is included in Attachment #13. . It is also included in the *St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families Foster Care Manual*.

(5) Family Group Conference (FGC) Outline and Summary Report

Project staff developed practice and training materials for Family Group Conferences. The Family Group Conference Outline (used by the FGC facilitators) covers the format for each Family Group Conference and includes basic information to be shared during the conference. The Family Group Conference Summary follows the format of the Outline. It includes information both on the information shared at the conference and on the permanency and service plans that were developed. The pages are formatted to indicate clearly the information that is intended to be shared with Family Court. The Family Group Conference Summary, is sent to all FGC participants. Both documents are included in Attachment #6. The Family Facilitator Training Materials are included in Attachment #7.

b. Self-Assessment Tools

The following two self-assessment tools were developed in response to focus groups conducted by the Project Coordinator with caseworkers and supervisors to solicit their needs and suggestions for what kind of reports would be considered most useful.

- Caseload Due Dates
- Services and Planning Tracking Sheet

(1) Caseload Due Dates

The Caseload Due Dates form is a management report developed by FTP staff as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet document, which is produced on an as-needed basis. Located on each caseworker's and supervisor's personal computer, the form projects UCR due dates over two years in advance for each child in the worker's caseload, and displays (as a shaded area on the screen) goal dates that have passed. This information allows caseworkers and supervisors to plan in advance how best to manage their time and cases to meet permanency standards. The Caseload Due Dates form has been integrated into St. Christopher-Ottolie's ongoing, routine foster care data and case management practices.

A copy of the Caseload Due Dates form is included in Attachment #14.

(2) Services and Planning Tracking Sheet

Based on the child's placement date, the Services and Planning Tracking Sheet is an individual case checklist developed by FTP staff as an Excel document which projects due dates for 17 critical management goals and tasks (e.g., Early Intervention Screens, UCR reports, the Child and Family Evaluation) through the first two years of a case. Similar to the Caseload Due Dates, this form is being installed on each St. Christopher-Ottolie caseworker's and supervisor's personal computer.

A copy of the Services and Planning Tracking Sheet is included in Attachment #15.

c. Organizational Management Tools

- Satisfaction Surveys
- Goal Duration Report
- Record Review/Quality of Services Assessment

(1) Satisfaction Surveys

Survey instruments were designed to assess the overall satisfaction of all participants – parents, foster parents, project staff, and (when feasible) youngsters associated with the Families Together Project. The surveys were pre-tested with 11 interviewees (birth parents, foster parents, and project staff) in late 1999. The results of the satisfaction surveys were tabulated by SC-O's Autodata System for Surveys, a system dedicated to quickly tabulating results of surveys of all types of agency practice. Findings from analyses of data elements from the four Satisfaction Surveys are included in other sections of this evaluation report.

In addition to compiling the findings from the project families and comparison group birth parents, foster parents, caseworkers, and children (when appropriate) for evaluation purposes, FTP staff developed an in-house tracking sheet to monitor the collection of the surveys.

Copies of the four Satisfaction Surveys and the Satisfaction Survey Tracking Sheet are included in Attachment #16.

(2) Goal Duration Report

Project staff designed the Goal Duration Report as a performance assessment and management tool so that staff, especially managers, could review concise information about the program goals for the families they serve. Useful for ASFA compliance, though not designed as such, the report helps in reviewing the appropriateness of each child's goal and progress made to achieve family reunification, adoption, or alternate goal in a timely fashion. Data elements include the supervisor, caseworker, case (family), and child(ren) names; the child's date of birth; the discharge goal; date the goal was established; how many years and days since the goal was established; trial discharge dates; and AWOL dates. The Goal Duration Reports are used for performance monitoring and priority setting.

This new management report was piloted from 10/18/00 through 11/7/00 during a review of the permanency planning status of all 2,017 children in St. Christopher-Ottolie regular foster care and 90 children in St. Christopher-Ottolie Therapeutic Foster Boarding Home Care. Individual cases that had special issues for follow-up were identified. Additionally, the review allowed the agency to identify program development issues such as closer follow-up on discharge practices, AWOL youth, collaboration with child protective investigators, and training on adoptions and writing court reports.

The Goal Duration Report was developed for the Families Together Project on an Excel spreadsheet and is now produced by the SC-O AIMS unit using the SC-O mainframe computer. Because the Goal Duration Report is based on information already collected by St. Christopher-Ottolie, no additional data entry work is required. The Goal Duration Report is now printed monthly, distributed to all foster care Program Directors and supervisors throughout the agency, and reviewed quarterly by the Director of AIMS together with Program Directors and supervisors.

A sample sheet from the Goal Duration Report is included in Attachment #17.

(3) Record Review/Quality of Service Assessment

The Record Review/Quality of Service Assessment form was created by FTP staff to collect data elements from case records, including Service Plan Review forms and UCRs; it is used at 60-day, six-month, 12-month, and 18-month intervals. The resulting data were tabulated by SC-O's Autodata System for Surveys. Data elements include the most recent six-month assessment of the birth parent/resource person; replacements and transfers; required child/parent visits in recent six months; sibling information; caseworker contacts/visits; child education, recreation, and safety information; and child physical and mental health services. Findings from analyses of data elements from the Record Review/Quality of Service Assessment forms are included in other sections of this evaluation report.

A copy of the Record Review/Quality of Service Assessment form is included in Attachment #18.

d. Project Management Tools

- Families Together Database, “Screens,” and Outcomes Summary
- Families Together Project Status Report

(1) Families Together Database, “Screens,” and Outcomes Summary

The Families Together Database was specifically designed to capture information about children and their respective families in the Families Together Project. Created in Microsoft Access, the database includes intake information, placement information, service provider information, and court information on each child in care, as well as service information provided to their families. The database is designed with user-friendly data entry “screens,” such as the Foster Parent Info screen which provides a history of placements and can track movements over time, and the Birth Mother Info screen which tracks the types of services provided to the birth mother, the date provided, and the level of completion of the service. The database produces summary data and reports used in the Outcomes Summary. Findings from analyses of data elements from the database are included in other sections of this evaluation report.

The Families Together Database is not on the St. Christopher-Ottolie mainframe computer, and it captures some variables not currently on the mainframe. FTP staff have suggested that some of these variables be added to the mainframe database.

A description of the Families Together Database is included in Attachment #19. A copy of the Outcomes Summary is included in Attachment #20.

(2) Families Together Project Status Report and FTP Research Cases (Data List)

Developed as Excel documents, the Families Together Project Status Report and the FTP Research Cases (Data List) track those families who consented to participate in the Families Together Project, including those who have agreed to participate in a Family Group Conference. Dates of Family Group Conferences were also tracked. Brief relevant notes can be added to the report (e.g., “birth mother missing, avoiding contact,” “birth mother not coming to agency”).

A copy of the Families Together Project Status Report is included in Attachment #21. A copy of the FTP Research Cases (Data List) is included in Attachment #3.

B. Related Product Development Activities

1. Development of Permanency Standards and Milestones

The Families Together Project developed the following six permanency standards and milestones as reflected in the tools/activities listed below:

- **Early Assessment (0-7 days with Birth Parents)** – Within the first seven days an agency worker obtains and documents critical case planning information including parents’ income and living situation; relatives’ names and addresses; parents’ and SC-O’s assessment of primary issues to be addressed; service planning; and visitation plan.
- **Rapid Assessment Questionnaire (0-7 days by Caseworker and Supervisor)** – Within the first seven days the caseworker and supervisor review the information gathered on the case; identify any

information that is missing and must be obtained; and assess the appropriateness and sufficiency of the service plan.

- **Early Intervention Screening** (within 30 days for children six years of age or less) – Within the first 30 days any developmental problems that a child may have will be identified and will then be addressed as part of the service plan.
- **30-Day Case Review and Service Plan** (within 30 days) – The service plan is reviewed by the caseworker, the supervisor, and the birth parents. It should be noted that the 30-Day Case Review and Service Plan was created as a Families Together Project milestone and is also a recently added ACS standard/milestone.
- **Family Group Conference** (originally expected to be held within 45 days) – The birth family, relatives, and significant others are invited to meet with casework staff to develop plans for children in care. It should be noted that the experience of the Families Together Project with Family Group Conferencing suggests that a more realistic time frame to conduct all of the necessary activities to convene a successful FGC is 45 days to five months. The Project Coordinator reports that in an expansion of the Families Together Project, St. Christopher-Ottolie intends to pilot the use of Family Group Conferences for Service Plan Reviews at 60-day, five-month, and 11-month milestones.
- **9-Month Case Review and Service Plan** (within nine months) – The service plan is reviewed internally by the Project Director, supervisor, and caseworker to assess how the case is progressing and what, if any, additional work needs to be done as the case approaches the 12-month permanency review milestone.

A priority focus of the project was to develop tools to track pre- and six-month milestones; this was accomplished with the Rapid Assessment Questionnaire (a pre-questionnaire) and the UCR Periodic Progress Report; the Caseload Due Dates; the Services and Planning Tracking Sheet; and the Goal Duration Report.

2. Dissemination of Project Findings and Products

Over the course of the project, FTP staff met with many individuals and organizations to present the project and disseminate information about the Families Together Project service models. These individuals and organizations are listed below. Project staff participated on an ongoing basis in two ACS workgroups: Concurrent Permanency Planning Workgroup and Steering Group on Supervision and Training.

In addition, the Project Coordinator attended monthly meetings of the New York City Consortium Outcomes Group, consisting of seven New York City child welfare agencies. This group has reviewed outcome measures in foster boarding home programs and residential facilities; developed/revised birth parent and foster parent satisfaction surveys; and reviewed the New York City Contractor's Overall Performance Evaluation System.

ACS's Satterwhite Training Academy will house the curriculum, and discussions are under way regarding future training using the curriculum. At least one other agency has requested the training for their staff and that is being scheduled.

The National Resource Center for Permanency Planning (NRCPP) at Hunter College School of Social Work will house copies of the Families Together Project materials and will list the materials on their website (still under development) and in their resources.

Human Services Workshops, which provides training to service providers in New York City, will assist in broad dissemination of the project's curriculum. The first presentation of the curriculum was held on February 9, 2001. This session was promoted widely throughout the city to voluntary foster care agencies and the Administration for Children's Services. Participants responded very positively to the workshop; project staff will make adjustments to the curriculum based on recommendations from the trainers and participants.

Materials developed by the Families Together Project have been included in a video conference, which was held by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services on February 14, 2001. A second session is scheduled for March 14, 2001. The conference, entitled "Concurrent Planning: Tool for Timely Permanency," was targeted to caseworkers and supervisors statewide.

Project staff and WRI are exploring the possibility of disseminating both the curriculum and the manual over the statewide CONNECTIONS system and on the WRI website. Several foster care agencies have requested and received copies of the foster care manual. In two instances the manual was provided to the other agencies on computer disk so that it could be adapted to fit the specific needs of those agencies. The ACS Director of Contract Agency Training has requested a copy of the manual on disk so that it may be more easily disseminated; in her letter of January 12, 2001, she stated, "we feel it may be a very useful document to other foster care agencies." She also stated that ACS plans to use the manual as a supplement to the new Caseworker Common Core materials.

A copy of the letter of request from the Director, Contract Agency Training, Administration for Children's Services is included in Attachment #22.

Following is a list of dissemination activities as described in the project's quarterly reports to St. Christopher-Ottolie's grants officer at the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

Year One

- A Project Summary Report was submitted for dissemination at the annual meeting of the Children's Bureau Adoption Opportunities/Kinship Care Grantees. Project staff followed up on two requests for project information generated at the conference. These requests came from Leake and Watts Services, Yonkers, NY, and the Policy Initiatives group of the Juvenile Court in Chicago, IL. Information gained at the national conference was shared with the ACS Concurrent Permanency Planning Workgroup.
- A Project Summary Report, standard business letter, and telephone calls from the Coordinator were used for Family Facilitator recruitment activities. Recruitment activities involved dissemination of project information to the following organizations: Interfaith Medical Center/Methadone Maintenance, Brooklyn; Brooklyn AIDS Task Force, Brooklyn; Brooklyn Perinatal Network, Brooklyn; Brooklyn Pediatric AIDS Network, Brooklyn; Department of Health, Bureau of Maternity Services, and Family Planning, Brooklyn and Bronx; New York Foundling, Manhattan; Coalition for Hispanic Family Service Corporation, Brooklyn; and New York Theological Seminary, Manhattan. Other community building activities included contacts with the following agencies: Project Teen

Aid, Brooklyn; HOPE Program/Job Readiness, Brooklyn; Project Chance/Head Start, Brooklyn; SNAP (Strategic Neighborhood Action Partnership), Brooklyn; Youth Services Coalition, Brooklyn; and Community Associates, Brooklyn.

- Mary Jane Cotter, St. Christopher-Ottillie's Assistant Executive Director of Foster Care and Adoption, and Sarah Greenblatt, Director, NRCPP, participated in the Concurrent Permanency Planning Workgroup convened by Linda Gibbs, ACS Deputy Commissioner. The Task Force created a draft of expedited permanency planning documentation timeframes as part of ACS's implementation of concurrent permanency planning citywide.
- Sarah Greenblatt, Director, NRCPP, provided the keynote address at the Columbia University School of Social Work, Mary Goldson Lecture, entitled, "New Directions in Permanency Planning for the 21st Century," on April 7, 1998. Mary Jane Cotter, SC-O Assistant Executive Director of Foster Care and Adoption, was a panel presenter at the lecture.
- The Project Coordinator and Michael Duncanson, Family Resolutions Project Coordinator in White Plains, NY, presented a workshop at St. Christopher-Ottillie's Professional Day on April 17, 1998. All of the 15 participants received a packet including a written description of the Families Together Project and written information and bibliographies on Concurrent Permanency Planning and Family Group Conferencing.

Year Two

- A Project Summary Report was submitted for dissemination at the annual meeting of the Children's Bureau Adoption Opportunities/Kinship Care Grantees. Project information was exchanged with other conference participants, including New Alternatives for Children, Inc. and New Jersey's Permanency Reform: A Second Chance at Childhood.
- Mary Jane Cotter, SC-O Assistant Executive Director of Foster Care and Adoption, was a panel member on November 23, 1998, at an event sponsored by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Ms. Cotter's presentation on the Families Together Project reached 200 Executive Directors of voluntary agencies.
- The Project Coordinator attended the annual conference entitled, *Fostering Families: The Theory and Practice of Developing a Neighborhood Based Service System*, sponsored by the Council on Family and Child Caring Agencies in New York on October 13, 1998, and disseminated information about the Families Together Project to representatives from approximately five community agencies.
- Fifty copies of *St. Christopher-Ottillie Parents' Handbook*, 50 copies of *Welcome to St. Christopher-Ottillie Services for Children and Families*, and 50 wallet cards were distributed to project staff; also, 300 Handbooks, 300 Welcome books, and 300 wallet cards were distributed throughout the SC-O Brooklyn and Brentwood Offices, and 300 Handbooks, 300 Welcome books, and 500 wallet cards were distributed throughout the SC-O Queens and Rockville Centre offices. The Project Coordinator provided a brief presentation on the Families Together Project and the uses of these materials in casework practice for the Rockville Centre staff.
- The Project Coordinator met with Anne Lown and Philip Murray from The Salvation Army, and Erika Goldstein and Jennifer Rider from Association to Benefit Children (ABC). In each meeting,

information about the Families Together Project and its models of concurrent permanency planning and family group conferencing were discussed.

- A description of the Families Together Project's family group decision-making model appeared in *Protecting Children*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1998, a publication of the American Humane Association, Children's Division.
- Project staff met with Morris Heney, Director of the Office of Contract Agency and Case Management, Lisa Parish, Deputy Commissioner, Foster Care and Preventive Services, and two social work interns from the Administration for Children's Services. The Families Together Project and its models of concurrent permanency planning and family group conferencing were presented. In this meeting, ACS staff were able to engage in dialogue with all involved parties including birth parent, caseworker, supervisor, foster parent, family facilitator, family specialist, directors, and administrators. At the meeting, Morris Heney asked to observe a Family Group Conference, and subsequently, this request was accommodated.
- The Project Coordinator met with Janet Abbot from Columbia University School of Social Work to discuss the Families Together Project. The school was interested in exploring the idea of using student interns in the Project.

Year Three

- A Project Summary Report was submitted for dissemination at the annual meeting of the Children's Bureau Adoption Opportunities/Kinship Care Grantees.
- A Project Description was sent to the Family Independence Agency of Lansing, MI in January 2000 for inclusion in their Concurrent Planning Resources Guide.
- The Project Coordinator was a member of a panel on Innovative Ways of Achieving Permanency on June 9, 2000, at the New York State Office of Children and Family Services Regional Conference where she presented an overview of family group conferencing.
- The Project Coordinator was a member of a panel on Case Practice and Case Management Strategies to Expedite Permanency on October 24, 2000, at the Administration for Children's Services' STAR (Safe and Timely Adoptions and Reunifications) Program Contract Agency Conference. She presented the case management tools that had been developed during the Families Together Project and distributed samples to participants. The conference, which targeted agency directors, supervisors, and information managers, provided training on how the city was going to measure, evaluate, report on, and compare agencies on key performance criteria. After the conference the Project Coordinator responded to further requests for copies of the tools, sending them to The Angel Guardian Home and to the coordinator of the ACS STAR Conference for further distribution.
- The Project Coordinator sent samples of the *St. Christopher-Ottillie Parents' Handbook, Welcome to St. Christopher-Ottillie Services for Children and Families*, and wallet card to the Arizona's Children Association in January, 2001, to help them with a project they are planning that will use family group conferences, among other approaches, to increase permanency options for children in kinship care.
- On February 9, 2001 30 caseworkers, supervisors and trainers from other NYC foster care agencies were trained at Plans were made for Human Services Workshop to train 50 participants from other

foster care agencies and ACS using the curriculum on February 9, 2001. The training will be considered a pilot test of the curriculum.

- St. Christopher-Ottolie's training department will provide in-house training for SC-O staff using the curriculum beginning in March 2001. These sessions will be provided monthly at several sites within the agency and will continue until all program staff (caseworkers and supervisors) have been trained. The curriculum will also be added to the core training given to new workers.
- Project staff held discussions with the ACS Satterwhite Training Academy regarding future use of the curriculum for training ACS staff.

IV. PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

A. Background

The principal goal of the Families Together Project was to implement and study two new service methods – Concurrent Permanency Planning (CPP) and Family Group Conferencing (FGC) – and to determine their effectiveness, separately and together, in engaging families with young children in non-adversarial permanency planning. It was anticipated that the project families would show greater progress in achieving permanency goals. Further, it was anticipated that the families participating in Family Group Conferences would show even more frequent attainment of permanency goals and higher levels of satisfaction because of the non-adversarial, participatory focus of the FGC method.

This section examines the outcomes for participants in the Families Together Project including attainment of permanency goals; length of stay in care; placement disruptions; participation of birth parents in service planning; casework interventions; use of performance assessment tools to measure milestone permanency standards; satisfaction of birth parents, foster parents, and staff with the two service methods; participant views of the child's stability and safety and the family's progress toward permanency; and staff perception of teamwork, training, and relationship with supervisors.

Information was collected through the project's documentation and reporting systems as well as the Families Together Database (reported in the Outcomes Summary of 1/9/01) and the satisfaction surveys administered to project families, foster parents, and staff.

As described in Section I, Background and Start-up, 47 families (with 82 children, 67 of whom were age six and under) were recruited to participate in the Families Together project. All of the project families received Concurrent Permanency Planning services; 18 families also received Family Group Conferences. (The "CPP group" refers to the group that received CPP services only.) A matched comparison group of 24 families (with 47 children, 35 of whom were age six and under) was identified and tracked, matched by demographics, service status, and services needed and provided. This section provides information and analyses on demographics, services, and outcomes by group (CPP, FGC, and comparison).

B. Outcomes Achieved for Participant Groups

1. Progress toward Permanency Goal – Discharge to Parents or Relatives

Because of the non-adversarial, participatory focus of the Families Together approach, it was anticipated that FTP families would show greater progress in achieving permanency goals, compared with children in 25 comparison group families not receiving such services. The data indicate that:

- A larger percentage of FTP children were discharged from care during the life of the project than were discharged from the comparison group (34% of the CPP children and 34% of the FGC children, compared with 21% of the comparison group children).
- A larger percentage of FTP children were discharged to their birth parent (80% of the CPP children and 77% of the FGC children, compared with 60% of the comparison group children).
- Of those children remaining in care at the end of the project, children in the FGC group were significantly more likely to have return to parent as a goal (88%, compared with 62% of the CPP

youngsters and 70% of the comparison group children). It should be noted that the CPP group contained the highest percentage of cases in which there was no birth parent available (43%, compared with 36% of the comparison group). All of the children in the FGC group had at least one parent available.

- Of those children who remained in care at the end of the project and who had been in care for 15 months or more, children in the FGC group were significantly more like to retain the goal of return to a parent (77%, compared with 50% of the CPP children and 27% of the comparison group children).

These findings suggest that children in the CPP and FGC groups were indeed significantly more likely to (1) be discharged from foster care, and (2) be discharged to a parent (it should be noted, however, that one child in the CPP group was returned to care six months after discharge). Among children remaining in care at the end of the project, children in the CPP group were the least likely to have return to parent as a goal, and were least likely to have a parent to whom to return.

An unexpected finding was the large percentages of children remaining in foster care in the project groups who retained the goal of return to parents even after 15 months in foster care. The Families Together Project Coordinator suggests that this outcome may be a result of the intensive nature of caseworker and parent involvement which is inherent in this permanency planning model, resulting in increased reluctance on the part of caseworkers to give up on parents. Future practitioners of the Family Group Conference method should be made aware of this potential drawback to the model so that steps can be taken to counteract or guard against this tendency.

2. Progress toward Permanency Goal – Adoption

None of the children in either project group or in the comparison group were adopted during the conduct of the project. In retrospect, the time frame of the service component of the Families Together Project may not have been sufficient to include adoption finalization. The service component of the project did not begin until June 29, 1998, as project leadership decided to wait until the planning and training processes had progressed sufficiently to support staff knowledge and skills. The Project Coordinator reports that the process of adoption typically requires a minimum of six to 12 months of diligent efforts with parents before changing a child's goal to adoption, six to 12 more months in court appearances to terminate parents' rights and free the child, and a final six to 12 months to prepare all the necessary documents and a court date for finalization – 18 months to three years for the whole process.

For the project, the best measure of progress toward the permanency goal of adoption was the change in a child's permanency planning goal to "04-Adoption." Of those children remaining in care at the end of the Families Together Project, adoption was the goal for 38 percent of the CPP group (the largest "no parent available" group), for 12 percent of the FGC group, and for 30 percent of the comparison group. The higher percentage for the CPP group suggests that the use of concurrent planning resulted in some improvement in progress toward permanency. The percentage for the FGC group is lower than projected or desirable, however. Combined with the high rate of children remaining in care longer than 15 months with a goal of return to parent, this lower rate of adoption goals adds to the earlier concern that the more intensive involvement with families through Family Group Conferences may lead to a reluctance to change goals.

The relatively high percentage of comparison group cases with a goal of adoption may reflect the decision, shortly after the project began, by the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to promote the use of concurrent planning with all families involved in foster care. The Project

Coordinator reports that although workers did not necessarily receive training, there was increased attention to concurrent planning at St. Christopher-Otilie and throughout New York City.

3. Length of Stay in Care

In addition to showing greater progress in achieving permanency goals, it was projected that children participating in the project would experience shorter periods of time in foster care (at least a 10% decline in the number of days prior to discharge to home or change in goal to adoption). It was further projected that cases in the Family Group Conference group would show an additional five percent decline in number of days. The data indicate that:

- The mean time (years) in foster care for discharged CPP children was .81 (296 days).
- The mean time (years) in foster care for discharged FGC children was .84 (307 days).
- The mean time (years) in foster care for discharged comparison group children was 1.02 (372 days).

These findings suggest that children in the CPP and the FGC groups did indeed experience significantly less time in foster care than did children in the comparison group. The mean number of days for children in the CPP group was 76 days less than the comparison group children (exceeding the 10% projection); the mean number of days for children in the FGC group was 65 days less than the comparison group children (exceeding the 10% projection, but not the additional 5% projection).

Among youngsters discharged from care by the end of the FTP, the length of time in foster care ranged from:

- the CPP-only group – 774 days to 77 days;
- the FGC group – 686 days to 73 days;
- the comparison group – 661 days to 139 days.

Among youngsters still in care at the end of the FTP, the length of time in foster care ranged from:

- the CPP-only group – 201 days to 869 days;
- the FGC group – 212 days to 894 days;
- the comparison group – 168 days to 865 days.

4. Placement Disruptions

A reduction in placement disruptions for the children in the project was expected. Instead, the data show similar experiences for all three groups. The number of placements for the CPP group ranged from six to one, with 2.0 as the mean; for the FGC group from seven to one, with 1.9 as the mean; and for the comparison group from seven to one, with 1.9 as the mean. Each group had either a single child or a single sibling group that had six or seven placements. In two of the cases, there was an older sibling, and the younger child moved with the sibling; in the third case, a single child, who was in a sibling group, had significant behavioral difficulties. In each of these cases, multiple movements took place within one month as the agency searched for a longer-term placement.

It is not clear how to interpret these results. The Project Coordinator suggests that the results, although similar, show some more stability for the project children if one takes into account the fact that the comparison group had the highest percentage of kinship placements, which generally are thought to be more stable than non-kinship placements. Thus the fact that the project children, who were in more non-

kinship placements, were as stable as the comparison children could be viewed positively as being more stable than might have been expected for this group.

Regarding moves in general, of the 129 children in all groups, 70 (54%) were moved at least once. Of these 52 (74%) were moved within the first three months (and many of those within the first month); 31 (42%) were moved into kinship foster homes, and 23 (33%) were moved both early and to a kinship foster home.

C. Caseworker Assessments/Interventions

1. Number and Percentage of Families Participating in Creating Their Own Service Plan

One of the priorities of the Families Together Project was to help empower families to take responsibility for establishing and successfully completing their own service plan. This was measured in two ways: (1) through the satisfaction survey, in which birth parents reported on their perception of participation, and (2) through the reading of records, in which staff reported participation of birth parents in Service Plan Reviews (SPRs) on the Record Review/Quality of Service Assessment form.

Regarding perception of birth parents, data were collected, through a birth parent satisfaction survey, directly from 12 CPP birth parents, 13 FGC birth parents, and four comparison group parents who had participated in the Families Together Project for at least five months or more. The survey item was: "I participate in creating my service plan." All (100%) of the FGC birth parents indicated the Strongly Agree response category. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the CPP parents so indicated, with an additional 33 percent indicating the Agree response category. Three of the four comparison group birth parents reported that they had participated in the development of their own service plan.

Six CPP cases and five FGC cases were in the project sufficiently long (an additional six months) to complete a second survey instrument. On this second survey, three of the CPP birth parents reported the Strongly Agree response category, and three reported the Agree response category. Two of the FGC birth parents reported the Strongly Agree response category, two reported the Agree response category, and one reported the Disagree response category.

Regarding information on birth parent participation during the most recent Service Plan Review, the Record Review/Quality of Service Assessment forms were completed for 54 CPP cases, 31 FGC cases, and 47 comparison group cases. (The number of forms completed exceeds the actual number of project cases due to multiple data collection points – at six months, 12 months, and 18 months.) With regard to participation in the most recent Service Plan Review, the data indicate participation of birth parents (or discharge resources) in 92 percent of the CPP cases and 81 percent of the FGC cases, compared with 56 percent of the comparison group birth parents.

Regarding *foster parent* presence and participation during the Service Plan Reviews, two items on the Record Review/Quality of Service Assessment form recorded information. With regard to participation in the most recent SPR, data from these items indicate birth parent (or discharge resource) participation in 87 percent of the CPP cases and 52 percent of the FGC cases, compared with eight percent of the comparison group birth parents. Foster parents were present during SPRs in 24 percent of the CPP cases and 42 percent of the FGC cases, compared with 12 percent of the comparison group cases.

2. Locating Fathers

Fathers are critically important to permanency planning, yet frequently neglected. Not only can fathers be discharge resources for children in foster care, but their family members can be valuable as supports to a family or as discharge resources themselves. And it is impossible for agencies to involve fathers in planning if they are unable to locate them. For this reason the Families Together Project tracked workers' ability to locate fathers. Significant percentages of fathers were named in all three project groups (77% of CPP cases, 87% of FGC cases, and 91% of comparison group cases). Workers in both project groups were significantly more successful than the workers in the comparison group in locating named fathers. Of the 26 named fathers in the CPP group, 62 percent were located; and of the 23 named fathers in the FGC group, 78 percent were located. In comparison, only 38 percent of the named fathers in the comparison group were located.

3. Obtaining Birth Certificates

Much casework depends on obtaining critical documents, birth certificates being among the most critical. Caseworkers were significantly more successful in obtaining birth certificates for both project groups than for the comparison group. Birth certificates were obtained for 84 percent of the FGC children and 77 percent of the CPP children, compared with only 49 percent of comparison group children.

4. Use of Early Intervention Screens

Early Intervention Screens of young children are administered in order to assess whether children are meeting age-appropriate developmental targets or not. The screenings allow the agency to provide early intervention services to any children not meeting the targets with the goal of helping them overcome their delays at an early age. Early Intervention Screens were provided only to project children. Children over six years of age or under six months of age did not receive screenings. Ninety-seven percent of the children in the CPP group and 91 percent of the children in the FGC group who were six years of age or under received Early Intervention Screens, although only 12 percent occurred within 30 days of placement, and an additional 21 percent occurred within 60 days.

5. Early Assessment Process

One of the values underlying the Families Together Project was a belief that assessing the strengths and needs of families as early as possible was a critical task in the processes of engagement and planning for permanency. Early Assessments of the family were conducted within seven days of placement for approximately equal percentages of project cases and comparison group cases: 45 percent of CPP cases; 44 percent of FGC cases; and 42 percent of comparison cases. Within 30 days, however, the percentage increased to 62 percent for CPP cases and 60 percent for FGC cases, while not changing for the comparison group. Ultimately, Early Assessments were conducted for 72 percent of CPP cases and 67 percent of FGC cases, compared with only 46 percent of comparison group cases.

6. Use of Rapid Assessment Questionnaire

The Rapid Assessment Questionnaire (0-7 Days), developed for the Families Together Project, was designed to help ensure that the required information has been provided or obtained in a timely fashion (within seven days of the child's placement in foster care). Although few Rapid Assessments were conducted within the seven-day expectation period, over time, Rapid Assessments were conducted for 48 percent of CPP cases and 67 percent of FGC cases. The Rapid Assessment Questionnaire was not shared

with other SC-O units until the *St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families Foster Care Manual* was distributed in July, 2000. Rapid Assessments were conducted for 100 percent of the cases that entered the project from July 1998 through June 29, 1999. Subsequently, only two more Rapid Assessment Questionnaires were completed. This drop-off in Rapid Assessments coincided with the resignation of the first Project Coordinator, followed by the departure of several other project staff a few months later. Discussions with staff about this drop-off revealed a need for renewed training in order to make Rapid Assessment of cases an integral part of standard casework practice.

7. 30-Day Case Review and Service Plan Review

The SC-O 30-day Case Review and Service Plan Review is an opportunity for the caseworker, supervisor, and birth parents to review the current situation and service plan. As a part of the Families Together Project, it was another opportunity to focus on family strengths and needs and on planning early in a case. The data indicate substantially more 30-day Service Plan Reviews (SPR) were held for project cases than for comparison cases: 43 percent of CPP cases, 33 percent of FGC cases, and only seven percent of comparison group cases. Although these figures imply that 30-day reviews were not held in the majority of cases when they were due, the Project Coordinator suggests that there may be some intervening circumstances. In some instances it is likely that ACS set up or held the 30-day SPR before the child was placed with the agency. In addition, ACS began holding 72-hour Child Safety Conferences in 1999 and 30-day Family Permanency Conferences in 2000, that may have replaced the project's 30-day SPRs in some cases.

8. Continuing Review of the Family Service Plan

The data indicate that 90-day Uniform Case Records (UCRs) were submitted for 100 percent of the CPP cases, of which 80 percent were submitted on time; were submitted for 89 percent of the FGC cases, of which 78 percent were submitted on time; and were submitted for 94 percent of the comparison group, of which 81 percent were submitted on time. Six-month UCRs were submitted for 100 percent of all three groups. All FGC six-month UCRs were submitted on time; one CPP UCR was submitted late, as was one comparison group UCR.

In addition, 60-day Service Plan Reviews were held for 100 percent of the CPP cases and 100 percent of FGC cases, compared with 81 percent of the comparison group cases. One hundred percent of the 5-month Service Plan Reviews were conducted for all three groups. One hundred percent of the 11-month Service Plan Reviews were held for both the CPP cases and FGC cases, compared with 93 percent of the comparison group cases.

9. Internal Administrative Review

Prior to the Families Together Project, higher level administrative reviews of children and their goals had been limited to nine-month reviews for children with the goal of return home. The primary purpose of the review was to determine whether the child's goal should be changed to adoption. As a result of the Families Together Project, and taking into account ASFA timelines and concurrent planning, these reviews were moved up to six months after the child's initial placement and every six months thereafter. Such reviews of children with the goal of return home were achieved through the creation of the Goal Duration Report, which is now produced and distributed to directors and supervisors every month (see Section III, Product Development).

10. Time Spent in Court

In addition to showing greater progress in achieving permanency goals and experiencing shorter periods of time in foster care, it was projected that the CPP children would reflect a 10 percent decline in the total time spent in Family Court or with legal representatives, and that children in families using the FGC method would reflect an additional five percent decline. However, the data show little difference between the groups with children in the comparison group spending a mean of 5.96 days in court, CPP children a mean of 6.07 days and FGC children a mean of 5.49 days. The Project Coordinator suggests that there may be little connection between casework and court activity, as there are many factors that influence the frequency of court dates (health of judges, attorneys, workers, parents; availability of attorneys; overloaded court dockets) and almost all of them are out of the control of the worker/agency. Other factors potentially at play include mandated monthly drug treatment court dates and paternity or custody-initiated court dates (potentially increasing the number of court dates); and inadequate record keeping of court dates (potentially under-reporting of court dates).

D. Participant Satisfaction, Perceptions, and Knowledge

In addition to the more objective data analyses presented above, the Families Together Project intended to collect thorough and timely information about participants' satisfaction levels with various aspects of the project. It was expected that such information could be routinely collected at six-month intervals. Several factors emerged over the life of the project that limited this expectation. The primary factor was the succession of different types of individuals and groups directing this portion of the project, particularly the design of the survey instrument and the selection of the comparison group. Initially this work was being done in partnership with and under the guidance of university researchers through The National Resource Center for Permanency Planning (NRCPP). Subsequently, the work was continued with St. Christopher-Ottolie's in-house quality improvement department, and lastly, with the project's final evaluators, Welfare Research, Inc. (WRI).

As a result of these changes, the survey instruments for assessing satisfaction, points of view, and knowledge were not developed and pre-tested (with 11 birth parents, foster parents, and SC-O staff) until late 1999 and not finalized until early 2000, a full 18 months after the first cases had been recruited for the project. For the same reasons, the comparison group was not selected until early 2000. This delay created significant difficulties in administering the surveys. The majority of both the project and comparison group cases had entered the agency many months earlier. As a result, there were few new cases from which to obtain entry-stage responses and many cases where substantial work had been done with no surveys administered. In some instances children had been discharged, parents had disappeared, or foster parents were no longer caring for the selected children. Even after the survey instruments had been developed, there was much less success than expected in locating, meeting with, and engaging birth parents, foster parents, and staff in completing the satisfaction surveys.

It also should be noted that the initial expectation that useful information could be collected via surveys from children in the project groups and the comparison group proved to be erroneous. As reported in the May 4, 2000 quarterly report to the ACYF grants officer, approximately 75 percent of the children (age six and under at intake) were age four and under even at the end of the project, and hence were too young to respond in a meaningful way to questions about their satisfaction levels.

As a result of the difficulties that had been encountered in administering the satisfaction surveys and the limited number of surveys which had been collected, a decision was made near the conclusion of the Families Together Project to pursue as many FTP participants (including the comparison group) as

possible who fit the qualification of having received a minimum of five months of FTP services and activities. This final effort to collect information via satisfaction surveys produced the following birth parent, foster parent, and staff data. The results are presented for three groups: the families who received Concurrent Permanency Planning services only, the families who received both CPP and Family Group Conferencing services, and the comparison group families who did not receive project-specific services.

Note: At the time that this project was initially funded, concurrent permanency planning was proposed as innovative foster care practice. Shortly after the beginning of the project, it became required practice in New York City. Thus, many of the families in the comparison group may have received some concurrent permanency planning services.

Copies of each of the surveys are included in Attachment #16.

1. Birth Parent Findings

• Birth Parent Overall Satisfaction Findings

Birth parent satisfaction surveys were collected from 12 CPP birth parents, 13 FGC birth parents, and four comparison group birth parents. The reader should note that the small size of the comparison group birth parent sample means that findings must be regarded very cautiously, as percentages might (or might not) have varied considerably if even one or two more cases had been included. Response categories included Very Satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, So-So Satisfied, Not Very Satisfied, and Not At All Satisfied. Percentages of Very Satisfied responses from the Birth Parent Survey are reported below.

	CPP	FGC	Comparison
Overall, Very Satisfied with child’s foster parent	92%	54%	75%
Overall, Very Satisfied with SC-O staff	58%	69%	25%
Overall, Very Satisfied with SC-O services received	75%	39%	75%
Overall, Very Satisfied with SC-O communication	58%	54%	50%
Would recommend services of SC-O	91%	85%	100%

Birth parents in one or both project groups (CPP and FGC) reported higher or equal percentages (than the comparison group birth parents) of Very Satisfied responses in four out of five elements measured: with SC-O staff; with SC-O services received, with SC-O communication; and with child’s foster parent. The comparison group birth parents reported a higher percentage of willingness to recommend the services of SC-O. The CPP birth parents and the comparison group birth parents reported equally high percentages of Very Satisfied responses with SC-O services received.

Six CPP cases and five FGC cases were in the project sufficiently long (an additional six months) to complete a second survey instrument, and they did so. Because these numbers are so small, percentages can be misleading. Hence, findings from the second surveys are reported below simply as increases/decreases. No second surveys were collected from the comparison group.

With regard to significant changes in the responses of the CPP group, the percentage of respondents replying Very Satisfied decreased in assessing SC-O staff, SC-O services, and child’s foster parent. The percentages increased for SC-O communication and for willingness to recommend services of SC-O. With regard to significant changes in the responses of the FGC group, the percentages of respondents replying Very Satisfied also decreased in assessing each of the above satisfaction questions, with the exception of a slight increase in satisfaction with child’s foster parent.

In addition to assessing the overall satisfaction levels of the birth parents participating in the Families Together Project, the Birth Parent Survey further explored issues of birth parent perceptions and knowledge. Response categories included either Yes or No, or Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree. Percentages of Yes/Strongly Agree responses from the Birth Parent Survey are reported below.

- Birth parent perceptions regarding foster care placement**

	CPP	FGC	Comparison
I am told how my child(ren) is (are) doing	100%	62%	25%
My child(ren)s foster parent(s) treat me with respect	92%	69%	50%
My child(ren) are safe while in foster care	83%	77%	50%
My child(ren) foster parent(s) want me to be a partner in making decisions about my child(ren)	67%	54%	75%

Birth parents in one or both project groups (CPP and FGC) reported higher or equal percentages (than the comparison group birth parents) of Yes/Strongly Agree responses in three out of four elements measured: to being told how their child(ren) is (are) doing; to being treated with respect by the foster parents; and to believing their children are safe while in foster care. A surprising result was that despite the project's focus on promoting partnership between birth and foster parents, a larger percentage of comparison birth parents reported the perception that their child(ren)'s foster parent wanted them to be a partner in making decisions about their child(ren).

- Birth parent perceptions regarding SC-O interactions**

I feel welcome to attend meetings with my social worker and supervisor	58%	92%	50%
The staff at St. Christopher-Ottolie treat me with respect	75%	92%	75%
I feel included in the decisions made about the care of my children	67%	46%	25%
My role in planning my child(ren)s future is important	100%	92%	100%

Once again, birth parents in one or both project groups (CPP and FGC) reported higher or equal percentages (than the comparison group birth parents) of Yes/Strongly Agree responses in all elements measured: to feeling welcome to attend meetings with their social worker and supervisor; to being treated with respect by SC-O staff; to feeling included in decisions made about the care of their children; and to feeling their role in planning their child(ren)'s future is important. All of the CPP birth parents and all of the comparison group parents reported the perception that their role in planning for their child(ren)'s future is important, compared with 92 percent of the FGC birth parents.

- **Birth parent knowledge**

	CPP	FGC	Comparison
I know my options for long-term planning	67%	100%	75%
I know what services are available from SC-O	75%	92%	75%
I know about voluntarily letting go of parental rights	75%	92%	75%
I know about open adoptions	42%	54%	50%
I understand the purpose of temporary foster care	83%	100%	100%
I understand that I have to reach certain goals within a specific time frame	92%	100%	100%
I understand what those goals and time frames are	83%	92%	100%
I know about different guardianship and custody	67%	85%	100%

Birth parents in one or both project groups (CPP and FGC) reported higher or equal percentages (than the comparison group birth parents) of Yes/Strongly Agree responses in six out of eight elements measured: to knowing about options for long-term planning; to knowing about what services are available from SC-O; to knowing about voluntarily letting go of parental rights; and to knowing about open adoptions. All of the FGC birth parents and all of the comparison group parents reported that they understand the purpose of temporary foster care (compared with 83% of the CPP birth parents), and also reported that they understand that they have to reach certain goals within a specific time frame (compared with 92% of the CPP parents). A surprising result was that despite the project’s emphasis on increasing knowledge and sharing information about non-adversarial permanency options, the comparison group birth parents reported the highest percentage of knowing about different guardianship and custody options, and of knowing about the goals and time frames.

2. Foster Parent Findings

- **Foster Parent Overall Satisfaction Findings**

Foster parent satisfaction surveys were collected from 27 CPP foster parents, 17 FGC foster parents, and 16 comparison group foster parents. Response categories included Very Satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, So-So Satisfied, Not Very Satisfied, and Not At All Satisfied. Percentages of Very Satisfied responses from the Foster Parent Survey are reported below.

	CPP	FGC	Comparison
Overall, Very Satisfied with SC-O staff	63%	63%	63%
Overall, Very Satisfied with SC-O services received	78%	69%	50%
Overall, Very Satisfied with SC-O communication	89%	81%	63%
Overall, Very Satisfied with child’s birth parent	48%	44%	47%
Would recommend services of SC-O	100%	94%	88%

Foster parents in one or both project groups (CPP and FGC) reported higher or equal percentages (than the comparison group birth parents) of Very Satisfied responses in all five elements of overall satisfaction measured. Foster parents in both of the project groups (CPP and FGC) reported higher percentages (than the comparison foster parents) of Very Satisfied for services received and communication and for the question regarding willingness to recommend services of SC-O. Equal

percentage of all three groups reported Very Satisfied with SC-O staff. Very Satisfied responses regarding birth parents also were similar among the three groups.

Seven CPP foster parents and seven FGC foster parents were in the project sufficiently long (an additional six months) to complete a second survey instrument, and they did so. Because these numbers are so small, percentages can be misleading. Hence, findings from the second surveys are reported below simply as increases/decreases. Only two second surveys were collected from the comparison group foster parents. This sample size is too small from which to generalize, and hence they are not included in the following analyses.

With regard to significant changes in the responses of the FGC foster parent group, the percentage of respondents replying Very Satisfied decreased in satisfaction with SC-O staff, services, and communication, and with the child’s birth parent,

With regard to significant changes in the responses of the CPP foster parent group, the percentage of respondents replying Very Satisfied decreased in satisfaction with SC-O staff, services, and communication, and willingness to recommend the services of SC-O

In addition to assessing the overall satisfaction levels of foster parents participating in the Families Together Project, the Foster Parent Survey further explored the issues of interaction with St. Christopher-Ottillie staff and interaction with birth parents. Response categories included Yes, Always; Yes, Sometime; No, Not Very Much; No, Never; and Not Applicable. Percentages of Yes, Always responses from the Foster Parent Survey are reported below.

- **Foster parent perceptions of St. Christopher-Ottillie staff**

	CPP	FGC	Comparison
In an emergency, I am able to speak with my social worker or someone from SC-O.	89%	59%	63%
My social worker listens to me when I have a problem or concern	93%	65%	88%
The medical staff are helpful and answer all of my questions.	96%	100%	75%
SC-O offers training that helps me care for the child(ren) in my home.	78%	82%	69%
I received handbooks about my rights and responsibilities.	85%	94%	82%
I know who to speak to if I disagree with staff or a birthparent at SC-O.	85%	82%	88%
The mental health staff are helpful and answer all of my questions.	100%	71%	100%
I am included in planning and decision-making for children in my care.	82%	65%	81%
SC-O staff members want me to be a partner in making decisions.	58%	52%	69%

Foster parents in one or both project groups (CPP and FGC) reported higher or equal percentages (than the comparison group foster parents) of Yes, Always responses in six out of eight elements measured: “I am able to speak with their social worker or someone from SC-O in an emergency; my social worker listens to me when I have a problem or concern; the medical staff are helpful and answer all of my questions; SC-O offers training that helps me care for the child(ren) in my home; and I received handbooks about my rights and responsibilities.” Approximately equal percentages of the FTP groups and the comparison group reported, “I know who to speak to if I disagree with staff or a birth parent at SC-O.” The CPP foster parents and the comparison foster parents were significantly more likely than the FGC foster parent group to report Yes, Always, “I am included in the planning and decision-making for the children in my care,” and to report that Yes, Always, “the mental health staff are helpful and answer

all of my questions.” A surprising result was that, despite the project’s focus on promoting partnerships (in this case between foster parents and staff), a larger percentage of the comparison foster parent group (than CPP foster parents and FGC foster parents) reported that SC-O staff members wanted them to be a partner in making decisions.

- **Foster parent perceptions of birth parents**

	CPP	FGC	Comparison
The birth parent(s) of my foster child(ren) want(s) me to be a partner in making decisions about him/her/them	49%	58%	50%

In this third question about partnership, the FGC foster parent group reported the highest percentage of Yes, Always, “the birth parent of my foster child(ren) want(s) me to be a partner in making decisions about him/her/them” (compared with 54% of the FGC birth parents so reporting). The responses of the CPP foster parents and birth parents were further apart, with 67 percent of birth parents compared with 49 percent of foster parents reporting a sense of partnership with each other. The responses of the comparison group foster parents and birth parents also were further apart, with 75 percent of the birth parents compared with 50 percent of the foster parents reporting a sense of partnership with each other.

3. Staff Perception of Teamwork, Training, and Relationship with Supervisors

Staff satisfaction surveys were collected from four CPP staff, 11 FGC staff, and 10 comparison group staff. Two of the CPP staff were family specialists; the other two were caseworkers. The FGC staff respondents included two supervisors and two family specialists, three caseworkers, and four family facilitators. All of the comparison staff respondents were caseworkers. It may be noted that there were fewer CPP surveys and more FGC surveys than might be expected. This is another effect from the decrease in children entering foster care during the project period (discussed more fully in Section I, Background and Start-up).

Although the project began with the expectation that one unit of workers would be dedicated to CPP cases and one unit would be dedicated to FGC cases, early in the life of the project this distinction disappeared. With fewer cases coming into the project units, it was not possible to keep the Family Group Conference cases segregated to a single unit and still get close to the desired total number of FGC cases. Thus, most of the workers in both project units participated in a Family Group Conference and were, therefore, counted as FGC staff. The experiences and training of both projects units were similar, while those of the staff associated with the comparison group were not. That is, the comparison group staff did not receive any special project-related training or cases. Reflective of this blurring of distinction between the CPP staff and the FGC staff, findings presented below include combined CPP and FGC responses. Responses included Yes, Always, Yes, Sometimes, No, Not Very Much, and No, Never. Percentages of Yes, Always responses from the Staff Survey are reported below.

- **Sense of teamwork**

	Project Staff	Comparison Staff
I have a sense of teamwork with my supervisor	80%	40%
I have a sense of teamwork with my co-workers	47%	40%
I have a sense of teamwork with foster parents	47%	20%
I have a sense of teamwork with birth parents	53%	10%

Project staff members reported higher or equal percentages (than the comparison group staff members) of Yes, Always responses in all of the teamwork elements measured.

- **Job training and preparation**

	Project Staff	Comparison Staff
I received adequate orientation training when I first started my job	33%	0%
I have received relevant on-going training related to my job	20%	10%
I feel prepared to assist birth parents with children in foster care placement	60%	20%
I feel prepared to assist foster parents with children in their care	80%	20%
I feel that my job give me an opportunity to help parents and children plan for a better future	60%	22%

Project staff members reported higher or equal percentages (than the comparison group staff members) of Yes, Always responses in all of the teamwork elements measured.

- **Relationship with supervisor**

	Project Staff	Comparison Staff
My immediate supervisor provides adequate on-the-job support and guidance	80%	33%
My immediate supervisor communicates with me on a regular basis and actively informs me of my work performance.	73%	44%

Project staff members reported higher percentages (than the comparison staff members) of Yes, Always responses to both of the two supervisor questions.

V. ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

A. Background

St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families proposed the Families Together Project to test and share knowledge about approaches that stress early engagement and support the inclusion of families and children in the permanency planning process. The agency hoped to develop skilled staff, practices, and materials that could be sustained long after the project ended. Ultimately, the intention was to integrate the project's effective elements into practice throughout the agency. It was felt that incorporating the project's successes would result in better services for children and families, reduce the time children spend in foster care, and reduce New York City's financial burden from foster care. Specifically, the plan was (1) to develop a cadre of casework staff skilled in Concurrent Permanency Planning and Family Group Conferences; (2) to establish performance standards, outcome measures, and assessment tools to evaluate the agency's effectiveness and efficiency; and (3) to develop a foster care manual for everyday use by workers and a curriculum on "what works best for families." This section summarizes the effect the project had on the SC-O Brooklyn Foster Care Office and the agency as a whole.

B. Development of Skilled Staff and Integration of Project Practices

The Project Coordinator reports that the project's principles and practices of Family-to-Family casework – early engagement of parents; strengths and needs assessments; full disclosure; and concurrent permanency planning – have had a strong impact on St. Christopher-Ottolie's Brooklyn Foster Care Office and on the agency as a whole. The practice of Family Group Conferencing is being expanded within the Brooklyn office, and FGC goals and principles are being shared agency-wide, with elements being added into current conferencing practices. (See Section I, Background and Start-up for information on the two strategies promoted and used by the project – Concurrent Permanency Planning and the Family Group Conference.)

The staff training given as part of the project substantially increased awareness, knowledge, and commitment to the CPP and FGC principles and practices for project caseworkers and supervisors. These topics have also been incorporated into St. Christopher-Ottolie's core training for all new caseworkers and supervisors. The project curriculum, *Families as Partners in Permanency: A Curriculum in Skills Development*, is being delivered to all current casework staff to improve their skills in these areas. (See Section II, Staff and Foster Parent Recruitment and Training, for information on staff training.)

C. Integration of Performance Standards, Outcome Measures, and Assessment Tools

The Families Together Project developed a variety of materials, tools, and procedures that have been integrated fully or partially into St. Christopher-Ottolie's ongoing, routine foster care case management and data collection practices, and will continue to be used in the future. In addition to the manual, the curriculum, and the information packet, the Families Together Project created a number of outcomes-based performance assessment tools to track progress on the performance standards and to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the new service models. All materials are available for replication and use in the public and private sectors. (See Section III, Product Development, for detailed information about the products listed below.)

The Project Coordinator further reports that St. Christopher-Ottolie has been able to improve case management both for individual caseworkers and agency-wide as a result of tools developed from the project. The Caseload Due Dates form and Services and Planning Tracking Sheet help workers and supervisors stay on top of permanency requirements and milestones for their cases. Before the project, higher level administrative reviews of children and their goals had been limited to nine-month reviews for children with the goal of return home. By the conclusion of the project, routine high level, internal administrative reviews of all children were achieved through the creation of the Goal Duration Report, which is now produced and distributed to directors and supervisors every month. The development and implementation of this report has allowed the agency to track ASFA permanency requirements agency-wide.

Materials developed by the project and now used throughout the agency include:

- *St. Christopher-Ottolie Services for Children and Families Foster Care Manual*
- Families Together Project Curriculum – *Families as Partners in Permanency: A Curriculum for Skills Development*
- Information Packets – Welcome Handbooks, Parent Handbooks, and wallet cards
- UCR Periodic Progress Report
- Early Assessment Form
- Rapid Assessment Questionnaire
- Goal Duration Report

Materials developed and now used throughout the Brooklyn office (nine foster care units), with the intention of being integrated into practice throughout the agency, include:

- Early Intervention Screens
- Family Group Conference materials
- Caseload Due Dates form
- Services and Planning Tracking Sheet

Materials that the agency is integrating into regular practice include:

- Record Review/Quality of Services Assessment Form
- Families Together Database

(See Section III, Product Development, for information on materials developed for the project.)

D. Effect on Time in Care and Financial Costs

As described in Section IV, Participant Outcomes, the Families Together Project was successful in reducing the time that children spent in foster care. That reduction of days that children spent in care resulted in significant financial savings to St. Christopher-Ottolie and to ACS. As more of the knowledge, skills, and materials developed from the project are incorporated into the agency as a whole, staff hope to further reduce the length of time children spend in foster care as well as the financial burden associated with their care.

Data collected through the Families Together Database (and reported in the Outcomes Summary of 1/22/01 in Attachment #20) indicate that the mean time in foster care for the comparison group children was 372 days; for the CPP children was 296 days; and for the FGC children was 307 days. The mean number of days for children in the CPP group was 76 days less than the comparison group children (exceeding the 10% reduction estimated in the project's proposal); the mean number of days for children in the FGC group was 65 days less than the comparison group children (also exceeding the 10% estimated reduction, but not the additional 5% reduction estimated for the FGC cases).

The cost per child per day at St. Christopher-Ottolie during the 1999-2000 fiscal year was \$37.36 (\$20.56 passed through to foster parents for care and clothing for the child and \$16.80 for administrative costs). Using these figures, the financial savings associated with a reduction in care of 76 days would be \$2,839 per child, and the financial savings associated with a reduction of 65 days would be \$2,428 per child. For the 28 project children discharged from care, this added up to a total savings over two years of \$74,149.