

Kansas Integration Institute



In August 2013, the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI) office of the Department of Children and Families sent representatives to the Kansas Integration Institute: *Connecting Healthy Relationship Education Skills and Safety-Net Services as an Integrated Approach to Strengthening Families* one-day training hosted by the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families. At the Integration Institute, both Lucy (FBCI's director) and George (Deputy Director at FBCI) developed an action plan with the following SMART goal: "By the end of the year initiate the Kansas Healthy Relationship Coalition." Along with this SMART goal and action plan, the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families' (Resource Center) set dates at 45 days and 90 days

post-training to reach out to Lucy and George and provide additional technical assistance.

The FBCI office has historically partnered with direct service providers to improve the well-being of Topeka's low-income families. Following the Kansas Integration Institute, Lucy reached out to NETReach, a neighborhood empowerment organization that helps vulnerable families develop healthy relationship skills necessary for personal and professional success. Lucy wanted NetReach to partner with her office to mentor families in poverty about relationships and economic stability within the home.

"We were able to assist [NETReach] as they developed a mentoring program...that focuses on life-skill needs of their members," said Lucy, "and they very much focus on the parent-child relationships." The program matched community mentors with single female heads of household (the majority of families served), as well as fathers. In addition, these two organizations partnered together on a work readiness program for unemployed and underemployed fathers that offers an intensive three week training course as well as a yearlong mentoring and case management training for dads.

The neighborhood in which these services were offered has the highest rate of out-of-home placements, addiction, homelessness, and crime in Topeka. With their efforts in that neighborhood, in addition to strengthening families, the mentorship program has contributed to a 25% drop in certain types of crime, such as burglaries. FBCI has supported NETReach's progress and NETReach has done the on-the-ground work. Specifically, they have connected NETReach with existing resources, with people within Lucy's agency, and sometimes even other agencies to help them seek solutions for challenges they may be facing with specific situations or families. Lucy has also been able to put different curriculums in their hands for ongoing use.
