

FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE (FPI)

FPI is a capitated child welfare partnership between Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper MI., Inc. and 15 counties. It serves youth and their families through a philosophy of unconditional care, focusing on their strengths, and involving them as equal participants in the decision making process. We are committed to creating and supporting partnerships between families and their natural supports, county staff, schools and other community stakeholders to facilitate positive change and stability for the youth we serve. From our beginning in 1997 we have demonstrated through our outcomes that this model is a successful tool in improved school performance, positive behavioral change and non-residential permanence in youth who are at the deep-end of the Human Services system.

The leadership consortium (made up of the county partners and LSS) creates a venue for open dialogue and brainstorming about current challenges, gaps in resources, and new opportunities to serve the ever-changing population. They are committed to maintaining an environment where the creative evolution of this program is not restricted by administrative barriers. With their help, we continue to evolve and adapt the model structure to current and future needs, while staying within the mission and values of FPI's stated philosophy.

THE PHILOSOPHY AND VALUES OF THE FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE

Lutheran Social Services believes that home or its most natural substitute is where children should grow up and thrive. We are committed to providing an integrated array of services that afford families individualized and comprehensive assistance towards remaining intact and improving their functioning. These services must be community based utilizing existing as well as newly developed resources from a variety of internal as well as external sources. Collaboration with other vendors is critical to successfully implement the array.

UNDERLYING VALUES THAT DRIVE OUR PHILOSOPHY AND STANDARD OF SERVICE

Families are full partners with providers in caring for their children. We are dependent on the involvement of parents in all phases of service delivery as key resources that should be listened to and treated with respect. They must be included as equal members of the planning team and included in the development, implementation, monitoring and modifying of service plan.

Services that are provided to children and their families must be culturally competent. Our services and those provided by our network will be sensitive and responsive to the uniqueness of our customers. The diversity of the families we will serve goes beyond ethnic differences. It relates to cultural differences between rural and city life, single parent families and two parent households. We will be sensitive and respectful of these issues when assessing the family's strengths and needs, and in the development of the service plan.

The concept that children can best learn to become competent and productive adults if they live in, and learn from, a normalized environment. This goes beyond the concept of placement in the least restrictive environment. It is a belief in keeping children in their own family and cultural setting. When that is not possible due to safety or supervision issues, then supporting family-like settings and normative lifestyles in communities is a reasonable response.

Unconditional care extends the rights of parental care to children regardless of the severity of their behavior, emotional or mental uniqueness, handicap, age, sex, race, or ethnicity. It is the commitment to do whatever it takes, to never give up. Services are provided to the children regardless of the presenting problem. Challenging behaviors or difficult service needs are not considered justification for discharge. Services are individualized and developed to fit the child/family, as opposed to the child/family needing to fit the services. This is contingent on our agency's ability to flexibly provide for a broad spectrum of needs through an array of services and living environments, utilizing internal as well as network resources. To meet this challenge we must be able to provide services to support families that can deflect the placement of children in substitute care, help families incorporate a child who has been in substitute care back into family life, assess and then address with resources the issues that put the family at risk. This is a commitment to provide care for youth with challenging behaviors that have had numerous failed placements; families who are at high risk for, or have been disrupted by, the placement of children.

Families have strengths that can provide a base to build on for future independence. We must emphasize the assets and coping skills of the child and family as the service plan is developed. They have unique talents, skills and life histories that must be included in the planning of the service delivery.

Individualized services must be child centered and family focused. The needs of the children and their families must dictate the types and mix of service provided. We must be committed to adapting the services and their delivery system to families, not expecting them to conform to a categorical program configuration. This will require flexibility and creative coordination to create opportunities for involvement and self-determination.

ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS

- * No single resource or entity can work alone to resolve difficult, systemic and often complex challenges facing families.
- * Collaborations with other providers which incorporate as broad an array of innovative services as possible will be mobilized to serve families.
- * We are committed to working in partnership with referral sources, schools, other vendors and families.
- * Individual differences are strengths on which to build positive change within the family.
- * Those serving the family must be committed to working through challenging situations.
- * Family treatment planning and delivery must be customer driven and cannot be bound by one model or philosophical approach.

- * Non-traditional risks must, at times, be taken when more traditional approaches are ineffective. Creativity in providing services is restricted only by law and concerns of health and safety.
- * Services will have measurable outcomes ensuring the resources are used responsibly.
- * Ensure through case management that multiple services are delivered in a coordinated and effective manner in accordance with each child's and family's changing needs.
- * We are committed to the health, safety and well being of the children and families we serve.
- * The basic needs of the family; food, clothing, shelter must be considered a high priority and dealt with from day one.

Our commitment is to engage the family, their stakeholders, community partners and anyone else necessary to create a nurturing, safe environment for children to thrive in. Permanence can be defined in many ways, but permanence without natural supports is just another form of institutional care. That is just not acceptable.

For additional information about FPI, or other Programs of Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper MI., Inc. Please Contact;

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