EXTENSION CENTER FOR FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

2012 Federal Report Findings

WE MATTER TO MINNESOTANS
In 2012, more than 95,000 Minnesota citizens participated in direct education opportunities offered through the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Family Development. In response to major demographic shifts and in anticipation of future state trends, our center is working with and learning from communities with diverse populations, as well as individuals with diverse backgrounds. In 2012, a total of 31,733 program participants, or 33 percent of the total, represented racially and ethnically diverse populations.

WE MATTER TO THOSE WHO WORK WITH MINNESOTA FAMILIES
The Center for Family Development is also expanding its work so more families can benefit from University research and Extension programs. In 2012, 1,880 professionals learned about cutting-edge research and promising approaches for working with Minnesota families through our professional development opportunities. In addition, 1,832 volunteers contributed 20,000 hours of their time, energy, and talent to support the delivery of Extension education programs to Minnesotans. The economic impact of this volunteer time is about $432,450, when calculated using the Independent Sector leadership network’s 2011 estimate of the value of Minnesota volunteers’ time of $21.62 per hour.

WE ADDRESS ISSUES THAT MATTER TO MINNESOTA FAMILIES
In 2010, the Center for Family Development conducted a statewide environmental scan to learn about the pressing needs of Minnesota families. A report on the scan, which can be accessed at http://www1.extension.umn.edu/family/environmental-scan/, showed that issues of physical and mental health, healthcare costs and insurance coverage, and jobs and family finances are of the greatest concern to contemporary families. Our center offers programs and educational opportunities that address the issues of particular relevance to Minnesota families. Key findings of the scan included:

- Ongoing economic turmoil continues to threaten family well-being through prolonged unemployment, underemployment, reduction in wages and a lack of resources for meeting basic needs.
- Childhood obesity and its negative effects threaten low-income families disproportionately because of the cost structures of food, relative unavailability of healthy foods, and poor personal choices stemming from lack of information or a history of poor nutrition in the family.
- Families, whether recent immigrants or long-time residents, continually experience major transitions in their lives – such as getting married or divorced, starting a family or watching their children leave home, searching for their first job or retiring. These families need to become more resilient so they not only survive, but thrive, amidst all these changes.
Given the complexity of these issues, center staff not only work with individuals and families, but systems, policies and environments in order to help families build resilience.

The value of our programs is reflected in increased demand. In 2012, two of our program areas – financial literacy and family relationships – each saw a nearly 25 percent increase in participation. In addition, we have leveraged almost $1 million in new funding for outreach in the areas of childhood obesity and food security. This is in addition to the existing $7 million in funding for education and research related to improving nutritional outcomes in Minnesota.

WE EXPLORE IMPORTANT ISSUES
Our educators, faculty and staff are working with community partners to explore important questions through applied research and community-based participatory research practices. A few of the questions currently being studied include:

- Can benefits gained from nutrition education programs be sustained over time? (Schools are randomly randomized into intervention and delayed control groups; students and parents complete surveys, pedometer logs and BMI assessments four times over the course of a year.)
- How feasible is it to work with community partners to implement effective parent education programs for Latino parents of adolescents? (Seven community sites are trained to deliver a parent education curriculum to 40 sets of parents and their children - 20 in the intervention and 20 in the control group. Parents and youth complete surveys over two years.)
- Can a problem-solving court approach and comprehensive case management ("wraparound") support services for unmarried parents improve outcomes for children through increased father involvement, better co-parenting, and higher child support payments? (Unmarried parents coming through Hennepin County Family Court are randomly assigned to intervention and control groups and asked to complete surveys and interviews over 1-2 years.)
- Can an integrated program involving schools, community liaisons and parents effectively reduce educational disparities among Latino students? (Five year study with pre-post-follow up surveys completed by parents, school-parent trust, communication and parent involvement assessed by schools and parents, as well as grades and test scores provided by schools.)
- How do informal learning environments, such as museum exhibits, affect policy makers’ decision making regarding child and family policies? (A National Science Foundation study, including pre and post interviews with Minnesota state legislators, aims to ascertain whether communication of developmental science through museum exhibition is an effective way of translating science to inform state-level policy making.)

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