

The Community Café Approach

Families Partnering with Communities & Organizations to Strengthen Families

Community Café conversations spark leadership and relationships needed to strengthen families. Cafés are planned and hosted by Family Leaders in their own community. Family Leader Hosts design invitation strategies and conversation topics. Action plans result from collective knowledge and build on existing strengths of the community. Group-building traditions, customs, visuals, foods, and music from the cultures represented in each Café help to ensure cultural relevance. Meaningful relationships develop as families and community partners participate as equals in a series of conversations that promote relationship building and spark leadership. This approach is used in diverse communities across the country and is endorsed by the Children’s Bureau Administration for Children and Families, as well as the Center for the Study of Social Policy.

Community Cafés are a Research Based Approach

Appreciative Inquiry
Strengthening Families Protective Factors
Framework™
and Youth Promotive and Protective Factors
Framework™
World Café Principles for Hosting

“The results (of implementing Community Cafés) showed that one of the most common themes found among the clusters is social connections and community... Social connections can help moderate the negative effects of economic, neighborhood, and parenting stress (Barnett, 2008; Kotchik et al., 2005; White et al., 2009.)”
(Strengthening Families through Community Cafés: An Evaluation Study, University of Florida)

Community Café Partnerships Strengthen Families and Youth	How Do Community Cafés Build Community?
Improved parent/staff relationships (bonding and bridging social capital)	The approach is based on a theory of change that values meaningful dialogue
Increased information sharing	Family Leaders mentor others in leadership activities
Increased family leadership in community, practice, and policy	Cafés are designed by Family Leaders who relate to current issues in the context of their neighborhood
Parents as partners in formal service systems	Appreciative Inquiry spotlights and builds on strengths
People working together to build protective and promotive factors in the context of community culture, what is working well, and strengths	Family leaders design a culturally relevant, welcoming, and inclusive invitation and environment.
Participants of all ages are valuable contributors to their community dream	Group wisdom and strengths are the basis for change
Voices of marginalized communities represented in program and policy change	Cafés are designed to facilitate relationship building
	Cafés relate to building protective factors and youth promotive factors that relate to all families.