



Innovative Approach to a Community Based Child Welfare System

Child protection is not just an agency issue —
it's a **community** issue.

Local Investment Commission (LINC)

- Began in 1992
- Citizen driven, citizen led
- Charged with improving results for children and families
- Restructuring and reforming the delivery of human services

LINC is a Process

- to bring together, link, leverage resources of the public/private sector
- to ensure community/neighborhood governance
- to identify and collaborate with those who do the best job addressing families in need and at-risk
- to hold all of us accountable for the results

Core Results

- Adults working
- Children and youth succeeding in school
- Healthy children and families
- Young children ready to enter school
- Children safe in their families and families safe in their communities
- Youth prepared for productive adulthood
- Elders and people with disabilities valued and living as they choose
- Well-informed citizens making decisions about their communities
- Strong, thriving neighborhoods

Caring Communities

- Identify places where community regularly gathers
- Focus on low income, underserved neighborhoods
- Engage the community
- Establish Site Councils with citizen volunteers
- Develop neighborhood consensus around priority needs
- Identify services available to meet those priorities

Caring Communities - LINC Initiatives

- Comprehensive Neighborhood Services
- Welfare to Work
- Early Childhood Education
- Health Care
- **Child Welfare**
- Aging
- Neighborhood Involvement

Caring Communities – Child Welfare

- EDUCARE –training, education
- MFCAA – intervention, support, education
- **Child Welfare Initiative** – prevention, intervention, support
- **Independent Living Initiative** – support, education

Child Welfare Initiative



CONDITIONS

- In 2002, there were more than nine hotline calls a day in Independence
- In 2003, more than 1,200 families in Independence were identified as at risk of child abuse and in need of services
- There are more than 200 registered sex offenders that reside in Independence

GOALS

- Improve academic results for children
- Develop partnerships that will increase the safety of children in the community
- Develop systems that build strong families
- Reduce CA/N in this community

OBJECTIVES

- Provide support to families so children are ready to learn at school
- Provide attendance interventions: truancy and educational neglect
- Provide educational support for children and families beyond the school day
- Provide parent education and case management to families identified as at-risk

PARTNERS

- Missouri Department of Social Services
Children's Division
- Independence School District
- Local Investment Commission (LINC)

HOW?

- Alpha Referrals:

Reports to hotline that do not meet the statutory definition of abuse/neglect

- Investigations/Assessments:

Reports to hotline that do meet the statutory definition of abuse/neglect

- Family Centered Services (FCS)

Substantiated CA/N, intact families

Alpha Referrals

- Alpha referral received at the Child Abuse Neglect Hotline Unit
- Called out to Local Office
- CD specialist screens for assignment to ISD
 - ISD zip code
 - Not current active CD case
 - Not child on child sexual abuse
 - Not voluntary relinquishment of child
 - Not licensed provider

Alpha Referrals (cont.)

- ISD assigns to a Family School Liaison
- FSL makes contact with family within 3 days
- FSL “concludes” case within 30 days
- FSL makes contact with family as needed

FCS Referrals

- Cases are referred on a case by case basis, do not include court-involved or those assessed as high safety concerns
- Weekly safety meetings are held in the CD office and ISD cases are identified
- Weekly conferences between ISD and CD to discuss case transfers and closings

Families Referred (2005-Current)

- 472 Alpha Referrals
- 100 FCS cases referred
- 78 FCS cases closed
- 12 FCS cases transferred back to CD

Preliminary Research Shows...

- Fewer subsequent calls
- Length of time until next call has increased
- Lower attendance problems
- Fewer CA/N reports (compared to similar sized school district)
- Fewer families with subsequent contact & need for higher levels of intervention

Independent Living Initiative



Independent Living Initiative

- Background/Conditions
- What it is?
- Who is eligible?
- What is available?
- Preliminary numbers

Independent Living Initiative

- Activity



Conditions – National

- 500,000 estimated youth in care annually
- 100,000 are in transition between 16 – 21 about to leave care or have already left
- Of those 18 – 20,000 youth emancipate/age out annually

National data: Foster Club, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, Chapin Hall, American Public Human Services Association

Conditions – National (cont.)

After leaving care

- 25% have been homeless
- 46% have graduated from high school
- 42% have become parents
- 51% are employed
- 1 in 4 males and 1 in 10 females have been incarcerated
- Less than 20% are self supporting
- 80% have received mental health services with 54% having a mental health diagnosis

Conditions Statewide Missouri

- 16,500 estimated youth in care annually
- 3,500 are in transition between 14-21 and may remain in care until age 18 or age out
- We would estimate similar percentages in MO that emancipate/age out annually

Missouri Data: MO DSS Children's Division Annual Report FY 2006

Independent Living Initiative — Goals

- Help young people prepare for and make the transition from adolescence to adulthood
- Learn about and access available resources in the community
- Help youth prepare for and enter post-secondary training and educational institutions
- Make positive connections in the community

Partners

- Children's Division
- Local Investment Commission
- Many others in the community

What is it?

- Independent Living Services have been provided to MO youth age 14-21 since 1997
- Congress passed the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 to help young people who were transitioning from foster care
- Until 2007 in Missouri the services were administered by the Children's Division
- In June 2007 LINC entered into an agreement with the state to administer the services for youth in Jackson, Clay and Platte counties

Who is Eligible?

- Must be referred by the Children's Division
- Likely to remain in foster care until age 18
- Must be between the ages of 14 and 21 — in-care youth
- Former foster youth who have left foster care at age 17.5 or after, but have not reached age 21 — aftercare

Services Provided

- Survival Skills Classes – ten weeks
- Emergency Funds – food, shelter, car repair, transportation
- Educational Assistance – graduation expenses, applying for loans, grants
- Job Assistance – training skills, work clothing, transportation
- Emergency Housing Assistance – deposits, application fees, utility assistance, short term rent

Preliminary first year #s

- 132 attending high school
- 42 received high school diploma
- 22 enrolled in post secondary education
- 18 received scholarships or educational vouchers
- 48 employed