



Neighborhood House Family Center Program Evaluation

Evaluation Results for 2014

M A Y 2 0 1 5

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
Overview of Family Center services.....	1
Evaluation methods.....	2
Family Center program.....	4
Crisis services: ClientTrack data	6
Crisis services: Exit survey.....	13
Case management services: ClientTrack data.....	19
Case management services: Interviews	22
Food shelf.....	26
Summary	29
Appendix.....	30
Client exit survey	30
Focus group protocol	33

Figures

1.	Characteristics of clients served: Family Center	4
2.	Family Center families receiving any type of service, by zip code	6
3.	Characteristics of clients served: Crisis services	7
4.	Characteristics of clients served: Housing/utilities services	8
5.	Services received: Crisis clients.....	9
6.	Number of calls for crisis services	11
7.	Requests for crisis services, by zip code.....	12
8.	Types of service needed and received	13
9.	Satisfaction with the program	14
10.	Satisfaction with Family Center staff	14
11a.	Has your situation changed since receiving Family Center services?	14
11b.	Ways in which participants' situations have changed	15
12.	Improvements in situation.....	16
13.	Helpfulness of Family Center services in improving situation.....	16
14.	Basic needs.....	16
15.	Connections with community resources	17
16.	Contacting community agencies without Family Center assistance	17
17.	Informal sources of support	18
18.	Ways Family Center services could be improved.....	18
19.	Characteristics of clients served: Case management	20
20.	Services received: Case management clients.....	21
21.	Characteristics of clients served: Food shelves	26
22.	Clients who received food shelf support, by zip code	28

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Introduction

The Neighborhood House's Family Center program supports children, families, and neighborhoods on the East Side of Saint Paul by providing education, support, and referrals to community resources. The Family Center operates out of offices at six sites, including Bruce F. Vento Elementary, Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary, John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary, Saint Paul Music Academy Achievement Plus Elementary, Highland/Sibley Manor, and The Wellstone Center.

As part of its ongoing research and improvement efforts, Neighborhood House contracted with Wilder Research to conduct an independent evaluation of the programs and services provided during 2014.

Overview of Family Center services

The Family Center provides ongoing case management and crisis services.

Crisis services

Crisis services are provided to those with children attending one of the Family Center schools, as well as to other families in the community. The goal is to assist these families in meeting basic food, clothing, shelter, medical, and mental health needs.

Case management services

The Family Center also supports clients through three different case management programs: the Housing Trust Fund program, Family Community Partnership, and Refugee Resettlement program.

Housing Trust Fund: The housing program works to stabilize the housing situations of families with children attending Johnson Elementary. These families often need assistance with house repairs, utilities, finding housing, or resolving conflicts with neighbors or landlords; they may also need referrals to services not related to housing. Wilder Research conducts a separate evaluation of the housing program.

Family Community Partnership: The Family Community Partnership is a voluntary program, through Ramsey County Child Protection Services, that assists low-income families (who have minor children) with basic needs and provides information on community resources. Family Center staff work with families to address basic needs,

connect to community resources (including mental health supports), and offer general support and guidance to families.

Refugee Resettlement program: The Refugee Resettlement program, through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, helps newly-arrived refugees navigate their community by helping families secure food and housing. Case workers also connect participants to community services and provide information on employment, life skills, education, and parenting. Participants are also connected to other Neighborhood House programs, including food support and English classes.

Food shelf

In addition to the crisis and case management services described above, the Neighborhood House operates two food shelves – one in The Wellstone Center on Saint Paul’s West Side and the other at Francis Basket in Highland Park. Both locations provide food to those seeking assistance and connect participants to critical community resources that help them move “from survive to thrive.”

Evaluation methods

This section gives a brief description of the evaluation methods used by Wilder Research in its evaluation. Copies of the data collection tools are provided in the Appendix, and findings from each method are detailed throughout the report.

ClientTrack database and program records

Each year, Neighborhood House staff collect data on programs and services through the ClientTrack database, which houses descriptive information about the clients who received crisis or case management services, as well as food shelf support. Family Center staff pull the necessary data (covering calendar year 2014) and send all files, in either PDF or Excel format, to Wilder for reporting.

Client exit surveys

In addition to database records, Neighborhood House staff send Wilder data collected from client exit surveys. In January 2012, program staff began administering a brief survey to all clients exiting services each month. The survey is completed by individuals who exit service during these months, regardless of when they began receiving services from the Family Center. This exit survey measures participant satisfaction with program services, as well as their attainment of outcomes and changes in knowledge, behavior, and circumstances.

Family interviews

Finally, in March 2015, Family Center staff asked case management families to participate in a focus group discussion about what brought them to the Family Center, what services they received, what supports helped them the most, and in what areas of their life they still need assistance.

Three clients attended the focus group on Tuesday, March 10 – this number is too small to consider a formal focus group. In an attempt to get additional feedback from clients, Wilder staff contacted seven more case management clients; interviewers reached two additional people for a total of five discussions with case management clients. Any client who participated in either the focus group or telephone interview received a \$20 gift card as a thank you for their time. Findings from these conversations with clients are detailed in this report.

Family Center program

The Family Center served a total of 3,838 clients (1,417 families) in 2014, providing both crisis and case management services through the Housing Trust Fund, Family Community Partnership, and Refugee Resettlement programs.¹ Clients tended to be female (57%), between the ages of 23 and 54 years old (43%), and living below the poverty line (60%). Clients also represented diverse racial and ethnic groups, particularly Asian/Pacific Islander (39%), Hispanic/Latino (24%), and African American (21%) (Figure 1).

Most of the families served in 2014 lived on the East Side of Saint Paul in the 55106 or 55130 zip codes. Figure 2 illustrates the breakdown of families served by the zip code in which they lived during the time of service. The map includes 931 families, based on the data sent to Wilder by Family Center staff. Readers should note that there are an additional 51 families not included in this map, either because they lived outside of the Saint Paul border, or because they lived in a zip code that represented fewer than five families.

1. Characteristics of clients served: Family Center

	Number	Percentage
Gender (N=3,838)		
Female	2,191	57%
Male	1,636	43%
Missing data	11	<1%
Age (N=3,838)		
0-4 years	356	9%
5-9 years	478	12%
10-14 years	457	12%
15-17 years	256	7%
18-22 years	351	9%
23-54 years	1,643	43%
55 years and older	294	8%
Missing data	3	<1%

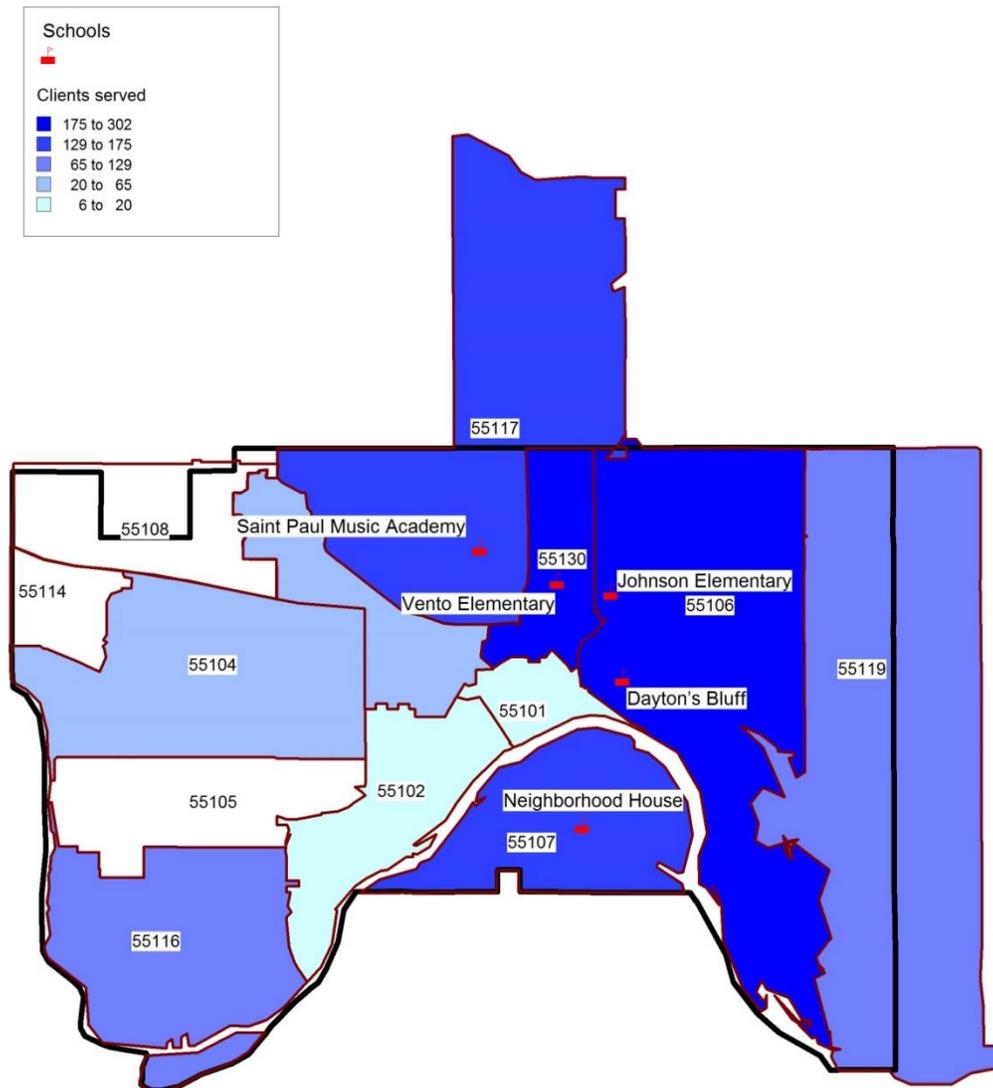
¹ This number is not unduplicated and therefore may be an overestimate, as clients could have received multiple services. The following sections break down the total numbers of clients by type of service.

1. Characteristics of clients served: Family Center (continued)

	Number	Percentage
Race/ethnicity (N=3,838)		
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,482	39%
Hispanic/Chicano/Latino	918	24%
African American/Black	816	21%
Caucasian/White	244	6%
Multiracial	191	5%
African	113	3%
American Indian/Alaska Native	43	1%
Other	4	<1%
Missing data	27	1%
Poverty level (N=4,096)^a		
Below 100% of poverty line	2,451	60%
Between 100%-200% of poverty line	288	7%
Above 200% of poverty line	62	2%
Missing data	1,295	32%
County (N=3,838)		
Anoka County	2	<1%
Dakota County	91	2%
Hennepin County	5	<1%
Ramsey County	3,656	95%
Washington County	12	<1%
Missing data	72	2%

^a Poverty Level is a duplicated number because clients move back and forth between categories, depending on their income situation.

2. Family Center families receiving any type of service, by zip code



Crisis services: ClientTrack data

Family Center staff work one-on-one with individuals facing crisis situations, such as a lack of food, clothing, shelter, or medical health needs. In fact, the numbers shown above in Figure 1 largely represent clients who have received crisis services.

In 2014, 3,710 clients received crisis services through the Family Center. Clients ranged in age; however, most were between 23 and 54 years old (42%). The majority identified as either Asian/Pacific Islander (39%), Hispanic/Latino (24%), or African American/Black (21%). Six in ten clients (61%) were below the federal poverty line; nearly all resided in Ramsey County (Figure 3).

3. Characteristics of clients served: Crisis services

	Number	Percentage
Gender (N=3,710)		
Female	2,107	57%
Male	1,592	43%
Missing data	11	<1%
Age (N=3,710)		
0-4 years	354	10%
5-9 years	475	13%
10-14 years	456	12%
15-17 years	253	7%
18-22 years	336	9%
23-54 years	1,545	42%
55 years and older	288	7%
Missing data	3	<1%
Race/ethnicity (N=3,710)		
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,403	39%
Hispanic/Chicano/Latino	905	24%
African American/Black	797	21%
Caucasian/White	239	6%
Multiracial	187	5%
African	105	3%
American Indian/Alaska Native	43	1%
Other	4	<1%
Missing data	27	1%
Poverty level (N=3,964)^a		
Below 100% of poverty line	2,402	61%
Between 100%-200% of poverty line	283	7%
Above 200% of poverty line	61	2%
Missing data	1,218	31%
County (N=3,710)		
Anoka County	2	<1%
Dakota County	91	2%
Hennepin County	5	<1%
Ramsey County	3,531	95%
Washington County	12	1%
Missing data	69	2%

^a Poverty Level is a duplicated number because clients move back and forth between categories, depending on their income situation.

Over 500 clients received crisis assistance specifically related to housing and utilities. In this subset of clients, there were notably more women (83%) and African Americans (53%). It is also interesting to note that, while 39 percent of those receiving any crisis services identify as Asian or Pacific Islander (the largest racial group served), this group makes up only one percent of clients receiving crisis services related specifically to housing and utilities. This means that Asians and Pacific Islanders are receiving crisis services *other* than those related to housing and utilities. Additional demographic characteristics are described below in Figure 4.

4. Characteristics of clients served: Housing/utilities services

	Number	Percentage
Gender (N=558)		
Female	461	83%
Male	97	17%
Age (N=558)		
0-4 years	1	<1%
5-9 years	0	0%
10-14 years	0	0%
15-17 years	1	<1%
18-22 years	25	4%
23-54 years	471	84%
55 years and older	60	11%
Race/ethnicity (N=558)		
African American/Black	294	53%
Caucasian/White	117	21%
Hispanic/Chicano/Latino	60	11%
African	26	5%
Multiracial	36	6%
American Indian/Alaska Native	13	2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	1%
Other	1	<1%
Missing data	5	1%
Poverty level (N=650)^a		
Below 100% of poverty line	289	44%
Between 100%-200% of poverty line	78	12%
Above 200% of poverty line	7	1%
Missing data	276	42%

4. Characteristics of clients served: Housing/utilities services (continued)

	Number	Percentage
County (N=558)		
Anoka County	1	<1%
Dakota County	7	1%
Hennepin County	3	<1%
Ramsey County	543	97%
Washington County	1	<1%
Missing data	3	<1%

^a Poverty Level is a duplicated number because clients move back and forth between categories, depending on their income situation.

Figure 5 describes, in detail, the specific assistance clients received related to each crisis episode. The most common services received were assistance with housing resources, culturally specific food boxes, initial intake and assessment, and assistance with utilities. Assistance with appointments increased compared to 2013 (from 11 clients in 2013 to 291 clients in 2014), as well as assistance with navigating resources in general (from 39 clients in 2013 to 116 clients in 2014). In addition, assistance with MNSure increased (from 6 clients in 2013 to 118 in 2014).

5. Services received: Crisis clients

	Services	Clients	Families
Assistance with housing resources	2,121	675	443
Culturally specific food box – Asian	1,478	1,298	266
Initial intake and assessment	1,065	1,051	468
Culturally specific food box – Latino	819	687	226
Assistance with utilities	600	224	140
Assistance with appointments	481	291	148
Assistance with applications	216	180	118
Bridge to Benefits screening	211	207	187
Assistance with navigating resources	165	116	65
MNSure	165	118	90
Advocacy	163	106	71
Furniture	91	57	33
Clothing voucher	58	54	32
Assistance with intervention services	55	37	18
Assistance with finances	48	45	24
Assistance with parenting	48	37	23

5. Services received: Crisis clients (continued)

	Services	Clients	Families
Baby bags/Baby needs	46	43	18
Food shelf	44	39	18
Housing resources	34	23	23
Translation services	34	19	19
Medical/Dental	32	19	15
Transportation resources	31	26	22
Energy assistance	27	26	18
Prenatal assistance	23	23	9
Unemployment application assistance	19	5	5
County food support	16	16	8
Back packs	14	14	3
Child care application assistance	14	10	5
Household report form	13	11	10
Immigration consultation/assistance	13	13	4
County combined application	12	10	10
Employment	9	9	6
Resource table and/or information	9	8	6
Social Security - SSI application assistance	9	7	5
Field trip	8	8	4
Health care application assistance	8	7	7
Legal services	8	8	5
Assistance with taxes	5	5	2
Assistance with child health resources	4	4	4
Assistance with early childhood	4	4	3
Adult education	3	3	3
Assistance with family reunification	3	3	1
Car seats	3	3	3
K-12 school assistance	3	3	3
Life Skills	2	2	2
Recreational and sport activities	2	2	2
Child support	1	1	1
Childcare support	1	1	1

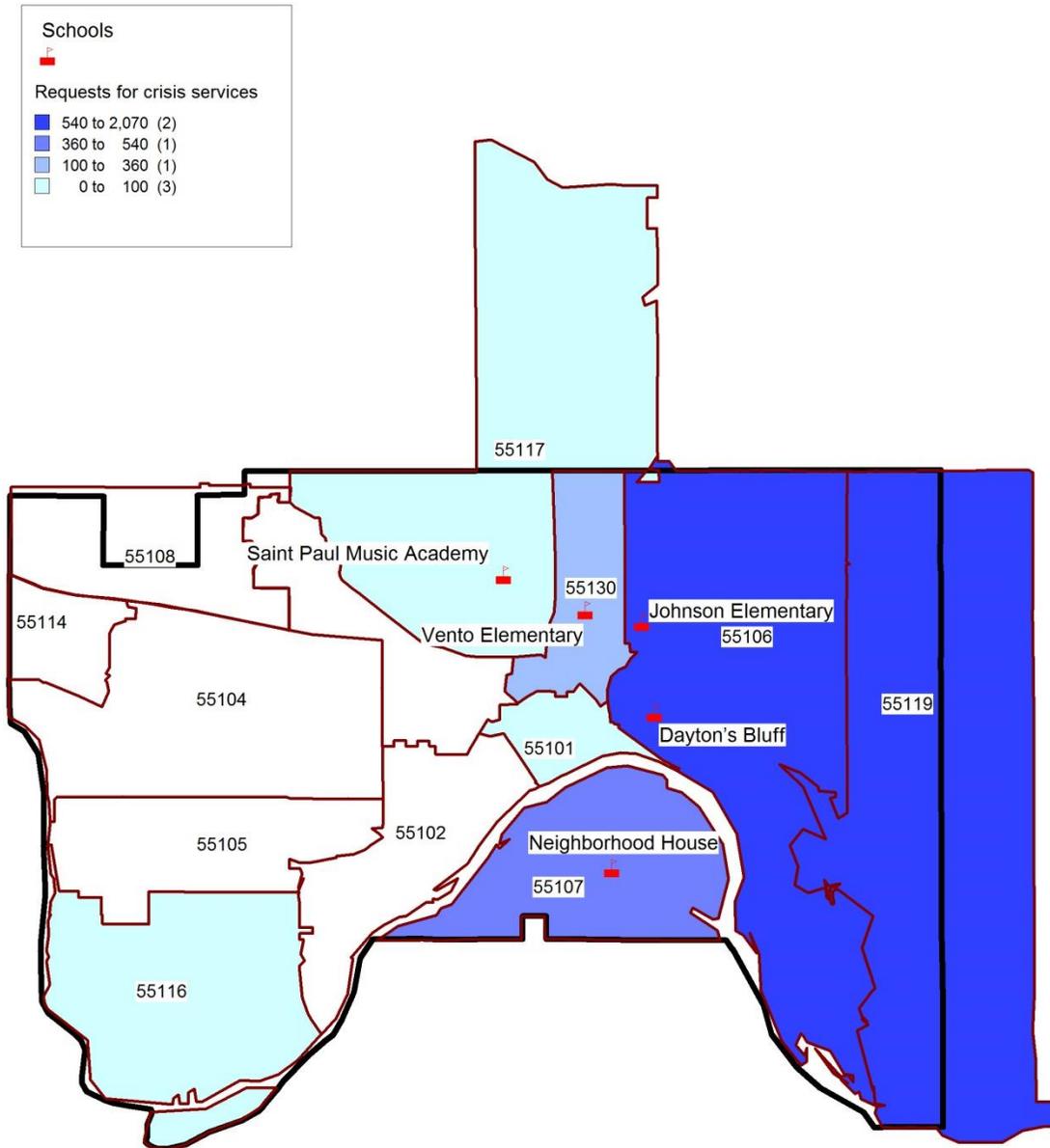
The Family Center received over 3,000 requests for assistance. Common crisis requests included assistance with rent, utilities (including power, water, and phone bills), damage deposits, and other issues related to housing (Figure 6). Additionally, 87 clients called for assistance with MNSure, whereas, in 2013, only 12 people called to ask for assistance with health insurance. Figure 7 illustrates the zip codes in which families were living at the time of their request. Again, calls tended to come from the East Side of Saint Paul, particularly zip codes 55106 and 55119. (Three zip codes were excluded from this map, because they represented only one call each, and were also outside of the Saint Paul border.)

6. Number of calls for crisis services

Crisis calls	2014	2013
Rental assistance	1,332	1,286
Utilities (power, water bill, phone bill)	865	805
Damage deposit	402	497
Housing/shelter	191	117
Car seats	130	73
Furniture (Bridging)	127	185
MNSure	87	12
Mortgage foreclosure	46	25
Transportation/bus cards/gas cards	23	18
Baby items	16	20
Taxes	16	--
Employment (i.e., job search)	6	13
Car repair	8	11
Applying for benefits (e.g., SNAP, MFIP)	8	6
Moving expenses	8	7
Alley shop	7	--
Landlord issues	7	--
Application fees	6	--
Section 8	6	5
Other ^a	51	47
Unknown	110	--
Total number of calls	3,452	3,228

^a Categories with fewer than 5 calls were coded as "other." Other identified needs included assistance with: back pay, court fees, food support, school supplies, storage, birth certificates, college or GED tuition, fire costs, furnace repair, group for mothers, getting a handicap sign, moving, license tabs, medication, prescriptions, pre-employment test fees, resources in general, air purifiers, broken water pipes, financial literacy, getting a plumber, school uniforms, getting a state ID, and Twin Cities Voicemail.

7. Requests for crisis services, by zip code



Crisis services: Exit survey

Clients receiving crisis services are asked to complete an exit survey addressing their satisfaction with the program and changes in their knowledge, behavior, and circumstances. In total, 47 clients completed exit surveys during 2014, from five of the six Family Center sites (all sites except Highland/Sibley Manor). The number of completed surveys is lower than the total number of clients who exited in 2014 (N=182); therefore caution should be used in interpreting these results, as they may not be representative of all client experiences.

It is also important to note that the number of clients reported to have exited in 2014 is down from 1,032 in 2013. This may be an issue with how ClientTrack records exiting families.

Types of services provided

Participants most frequently indicated rental assistance as an area of need, followed by assistance with utilities. The services that participants received did not always match the services they needed. Some respondents who did not indicate a particular area of need received services in that area, and vice versa. Figure 8 illustrates the total number of clients who needed help from the Family Center, those who received assistance (of those who said they needed it), and the total number of clients who received services or referrals, regardless of whether they indicated a need.

8. Types of service needed and received (N=47)

Areas of service	Needed help from the Family Center	Clients who received services or referrals, of those needing help	Clients who received services or referrals, regardless of need
Rental assistance	34	14	19
Utilities assistance (e.g., Xcel Energy, water)	14	6	7
Food	8	4	7
Landlord/tenant problems	6	2	3
Clothing	5	2	3
Employment	4	0	2
Mental health needs	2	0	2
Chemical dependency	1	0	0
Conflict with neighbors	1	0	0
Domestic abuse	1	0	0
Medical needs	1	0	1
Mortgage foreclosure	0	0	1
Other (not specified)	3	0	0

Satisfaction with services

Overall, survey participants were satisfied with the Family Center program. Most were “highly satisfied” with the services they received (89%), as well as the Family Center’s ability to help them with their needs when they first came into the program (80%) (Figure 9).

9. Satisfaction with the program (N=46)

How satisfied were you with...	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied
Services received from the Family Center	89%	9%	0%	2%
The Family Center’s ability to help you with the needs you had when you initially came to the program	80%	17%	0%	2%

Participants were also satisfied with Family Center staff. A majority “strongly agreed” that staff were knowledgeable and skilled (86%) and that they were available to clients when needed (73%) (Figure 10).

10. Satisfaction with Family Center staff (N=42-45)

How satisfied were you with...	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Family Center staff were knowledgeable and skilled.	86%	12%	0%	2%	0%
Family Center staff were available to me when I needed them.	73%	24%	0%	2%	0%

Changes in situation

Most participants (83%) reported that their situation had changed since receiving services from the Family Center (Figure 11a). When asked how their circumstances had changed, most talked about improvements in rent or housing. Several also reported that their situations had improved due to help with their utilities and other bills, as well as improved mental health and overall happiness (Figure 11b).

11a. Has your situation changed since receiving Family Center services? (N=46)

	Percentage
Yes	83%
No	17%

11b. Ways in which participants' situations have changed (N=35)

Housing or rent

We now have a house to live in.

I was homeless and now me and my children are in a place of our own.

I found a permanent home for me and my boys.

My family is now able to settle into our new place of residence thanks to the help received there.

I got a place to live and I'm going to get some clothing.

I will not be homeless and my daughter is getting glasses.

My rent has been paid.

Rent has been paid and I'm up to date.

I was able to get back on track with rent.

I don't have to worry on how to pay rent.

My rent will be all caught up and I'm back in position where I should not have this problem again.

My rent is now current. The Neighborhood House worked hard to make sure I got the help I needed.

I was able to move into my unit because the Family Center helped me with damage/rent.

I was accepted by a landlord to move in and the Family Center is assisting me with rent.

With help from the Family Center, my landlord has been more kind towards me. There are no more issues of eviction coming up.

Landlord received payment and I paid my portion.

I was able to receive help with my damage deposit and move into a new apartment home.

Somewhat – I still have an eviction.

Utilities or other bills

I got my Xcel services turned on.

They helped me get my water turned on. I owe them a lot.

They paid a portion of my bill.

My basic needs are on track with paying my bills.

Got assistance for my utilities.

Mental health and well-being

[I feel] relief about my electric [not] being turned off.

I received the help I needed and was given advisory on mental health issues.

I have a therapist for my child and an advocate for my family.

I am much happier.

More sleep and making my family happier.

Employment or school

My husband has gained full employment and we have an apartment. I am now in college full time.

My husband's work is getting busy with 40 hours a week.

I lost my job, am applying for unemployment, as well as a lawsuit.

11b. Ways in which participants' situations have changed (N=35)

Other

We are thankful that our current situation has been resolved.

I love this program.

I had a baby and needed help getting back on my feet and getting my rent paid. I am getting back on my feet, so I won't need any services to help me and my family.

When asked specifically if their situation had changed for the better, most participants agreed that it had improved since seeking services from the program (Figure 12), and 61 percent “strongly agreed.” In a separate question about the helpfulness of services, all survey participants indicated that the services they had received from the Family Center were at least “somewhat helpful” in improving their situation, with nearly all (98%) reporting that they were “very helpful” (Figure 13).

12. Improvements in situation (N=46)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
My situation has improved since I began receiving services from the Family Center.	61%	30%	7%	0%	2%

13. Helpfulness of Family Center services in improving situation (N=47)

	Percentage
Very helpful	98%
Somewhat helpful	2%
Not at all helpful	0%

Basic needs

As shown in Figure 14, nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents “strongly agreed” that Family Center services helped them meet their family’s basic needs.

14. Basic needs (N=45)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Services I received from the Family Center helped me meet my family’s basic needs.	73%	22%	2%	0%	2%

Connections with community resources

Most respondents (69%) felt that Family Center staff helped connect them with other organizations and agencies, although fewer (42%) indicated that they had actually received services from outside organizations (Figure 15). Over half (54%) of participants reported that they had sought referrals on their own, and an additional 30 percent reported that they would feel comfortable doing so (Figure 16).

15. Connections with community resources (N=45)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Family Center staff helped connect me with other community organizations, agencies, or classes that could help me with my situation.	69%	20%	2%	4%	4%
I have received help for my situation from other community organizations, agencies, or classes since I first came to the Family Center.	42%	22%	16%	7%	13%

16. Contacting community agencies without Family Center assistance (N=46)

	Percentage
Yes, I have contacted other community agencies on my own for help with my situation.	54%
No, but I would feel comfortable contacting other community agencies on my own.	30%
No, and I do not feel comfortable contacting other community agencies on my own.	15%

Informal sources of support

The majority of participants agreed that they had learned new strategies or obtained new resources that would help them if they faced a similar crisis situation in the future; 57 percent agreed strongly. While 75 percent said that they have friends, family, or neighbors to provide support during times of need, fewer (54%) felt that Family Center staff had helped them build closer relationships with these informal supports; however, 30 percent of respondents said that this question did not apply to them (Figure 17).

17. Informal sources of support (N=43-46)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I learned new strategies or obtained new resources since I first visited the Family Center that will help me if I face similar problems in the future.	57%	33%	4%	0%	7%
Friends, family, and/or neighbors provide support to me during times of need.	33%	42%	4%	11%	9%
Family Center staff helped me build a closer relationship with friends, family, and/or neighbors.	19%	35%	14%	2%	30%

Improvements to Family Center program

When asked how the Family Center could improve its services, most respondents said that they would not change anything. Of those who offered suggestions, the most common response was better or quicker communication from Family Center staff. Figure 18 provides a complete summary of responses.

18. Ways Family Center services could be improved (N=34)

How could services provided by the Family Center be improved?

No change needed/current services are good

Honestly, there is nothing to improve on. I came in with a concern and the Family Center had addressed my problem beyond what I expected.

I received complete attention from my case manager and we are so satisfied and happy with what she helped us to accomplish!

The East Side Family Center staff is awesome. They do what's needed to be done.

I think the woman that helped me was very good at her job. I'm not sure what could be improved; she dealt with my situation very well.

They helped me with every need that I needed. I am 100% satisfied.

Services were excellent nothing needs changing.

They were great. They don't need to change anything.

In my opinion Family Center does not need any improvement.

None; keep up the good work! I really appreciate all the help I got. Thank you very much.

They're doing just fine with the way it's run.

I think they are doing a great job here.

It's already great.

I think, overall, they are doing a great job.

I'm very happy that I got help.

18. Ways Family Center services could be improved (N=34) (continued)

How could services provided by the Family Center be improved?

You guys are great and do great work.

None- very satisfied.

None – the services are perfect.

Nothing

None, as far as I know.

N/A; everything was great.

Just fine to me; N/A

N/A

N/A

No comments.

Better communication

I believed things were prompt and well managed; however, communication could be a little better.

More responsive to messages.

Better phone contact

I feel they need to be nicer!!

Other

More staff members to assist families.

My only complaint is I don't know the hours of operation because I always stopped in during school hours. So, I suggest having hours posted on school's main entrance.

Please send copies to recipients as well as the landlord, thanks.

Continue to get basic food needs.

I don't know; they were helpful.

I don't know.

Case management services: ClientTrack data

In 2014, 128 clients received a variety of case management services through the Housing Trust Fund, Family Community Partnership, and Refugee Resettlement program.² The majority of those served was female (66%), between the ages of 23 and 54 years old (77%), and living in Ramsey County (98%) (Figure 19).

² Again, this may be an overestimate as clients are not unduplicated and could have received services from more than one program.

19. Characteristics of clients served: Case management

	Number	Percentage
Gender (N=128)		
Female	84	66%
Male	44	34%
Age (N=128)		
0-4 years	2	2%
5-9 years	3	2%
10-14 years	1	1%
15-17 years	3	2%
18-22 years	15	12%
23-54 years	98	77%
55 years and older	6	5%
Race/ethnicity (N=128)		
Asian/Pacific Islander	79	62%
African American/Black	19	15%
Hispanic/Chicano/Latino	13	10%
African	8	6%
Caucasian/White	5	4%
Multiracial	4	3%
Poverty level (N=132)^a		
Below 100% of poverty line	49	37%
Between 100%-200% of poverty line	5	4%
Above 200% of poverty line	1	1%
Missing data	77	58%
County (N=128)		
Ramsey County	125	98%
Missing data	3	2%

^a Poverty Level is a duplicated number because clients move back and forth between categories, depending on their income situation.

The most common services received across all case management clients were advocacy and assistance with housing resources. Many clients also received assistance with making appointments and getting transportation, as well as assistance with navigating resources, completing applications, and parenting (Figure 20).

20. Services received: Case management clients

	Services	Clients	Families
Advocacy	142	20	21
Assistance with housing resources	137	31	25
Assistance with appointments	54	17	18
Transportation services	52	52	30
Assistance with navigating resources	30	16	16
Assistance with applications	29	17	17
Assistance with parenting	27	15	16
Furniture	18	9	9
Assistance with intervention services	16	9	9
Initial intake and assessment	14	13	13
Translation services	13	7	6
Backpacks	10	10	9
Life Skills	9	7	7
Assistance with utilities	8	4	4
Housing resources	7	2	2
Assistance with child health resources	6	4	4
Bridge to Benefits screening	6	6	6
Household report form	5	3	3
Assistance with finances	4	3	3
County combined application	4	2	2
Emergency assistance	4	3	3
Child care application assistance	2	2	2
Employment	2	2	2
Child support	1	1	1
Clothing voucher	1	1	1
Culturally specific food box - Asian	1	1	1
Culturally specific food box - Latino	1	1	1
Food shelf	1	1	1
Health care application assistance	1	1	1
Legal services	1	1	1
Medical/Dental	1	1	1
Recreational and sports activities	1	1	1
Resource table and or information	1	1	1

Case management services: Interviews

In March 2015, Family Center staff asked case management families to participate in a focus group discussion about what brought them to the Family Center, what services they received, what supports helped them the most, and in what areas of their life they still need assistance. Despite staff attempts to recruit as many participants as possible, only three clients attended the focus group on Tuesday, March 10 – this number is too small to consider a formal focus group. In an attempt to get additional feedback from clients, Wilder staff called seven more case management clients, but were only able to interview two additional people, for a total of five respondents. Therefore, findings should be interpreted with caution, as they do not necessarily represent the views of all case management clients.

Introduction to the Family Center

At the beginning of the discussion, participants were asked how they originally learned about or got connected to the Family Center. Responses were mixed, with some saying that they knew about the Center because their child attends Johnson Elementary, and others saying that they were connected through a family member, friend, or other contact.

The most common reasons for parents to become involved in the Center were housing-related – either getting help finding a place to live or assistance in paying rent. Other reasons that respondents cited for coming to the Family Center included mental health treatment and support (both for the parents and the children), help finding a job or increasing overall financial stability, assistance paying utilities, and help getting basic needs, such as food and heat for their apartment.

Case management services provided

Although respondents often came to the Family Center for housing-related issues, they received a variety of services, including conflict mediation with landlords, getting basic needs, help paying utilities, help navigating the health care system or filling out applications, and getting connected to other resources, like counselors. Several interviewees mentioned that if the Family Center was unable to provide a service directly, case managers were very good at connecting clients to a person or organization that could help with a particular issue.

[The Family Center] helped in resolving conflict with my landlord...The whole conflict was rude, and [my case manager] was a mediator and I was proud, because she can be stern and in the end both parties ended up happy.

I get help with things like applications –or maybe a question I don't understand. [My case manager] is like my dictionary...She knows everything.

[My case manager] helped me with emergency assistance. I was in and out of the hospital and fell behind on rent and she helped me with that – get that situated with emergency assistance – also my utilities.

She helps find places to find furniture for us, like beds, chairs, and tables and connecting us to resources.

She helped me with getting food from food shelves, just being supportive and being there when I needed someone to talk to, and helping me if I was behind my Xcel bills.

When asked which Family Center service had helped them and their families the most, interviewees tended not to list a specific service, but rather talk about the overall support they received in case management. They said that the Family Center feels like a family or friend. That overall supportive, welcoming, and non-judgmental environment was critical for this group of interviewees.

[What helped the most was for the Family Center] to be a friend; to honestly be a friend. People look for things back, and they don't, because they honestly want to be a part of your life. They want to be a part of your family and have you be a part of theirs. I'm grateful for the financial resources, but you don't get the family feeling with anyone...They actually care. If I fall, they say, "I'm here to pick you up." If I'm homeless they're like, "Come on over." They'll figure something out.

They've seen my kids grow up – they're family. I don't know where I'd be without them.

Just being supportive; having someone on your side all the time. [It is helpful] knowing that someone's there with you and for you without judgement and without looking at you differently.

Just being there. Even when you just need someone to talk to. I've come in and cried and laughed – times are rough and sometimes you just feel like the weight of the world is falling down on you and [my case manager] is the type of person to help you shoulder that load. She's available. Just being there – that's been the service I've needed the most.

Help paying rent, because that helps us when we need to pay other bills.

Interviewees tended to talk a lot about the fact that case managers are willing to help out with any issues that a family might be having. The Family Center staff, in general, provides an important sense of stability and empowerment for families, which allows them to focus their energy toward other areas of their lives and planning for their futures. Parents said that they feel more confident and better equipped to handle various problems or issues that may arise in their lives.

I've developed a mentor-type relationship with [my case manager] –when things come up, sometimes I call her just to talk, to help get my frustrations out... I see her as an advocate. She gives you the right resources, but is there as someone you can fall back on if you need.

Life changes since connecting with the Family Center

The support that the Family Center provides to its clients appears to have a big impact, not only through its direct services, but also through more indirect, emotional support. Interviewees said that, because of the assistance they have received from the Family Center, their lives had improved. Several mentioned that their housing situation is better, and a couple talked about their advancements in education or employment; however, interviewees also said that they still struggle from time to time.

I am currently in my home. I have a great paying job, full time. My children are in day care – piece by piece it's coming together. It's not even the financial part [that helps the most]; just [my case manager] talking to me is the reason why my life is put back together.

While working with them, I was able to graduate college.

It goes up and down – my child and I argue; it's a struggle.

Unmet needs for families

Overall, participants were very happy with their experiences at the Family Center. The only change suggested was to have more afterschool activities available for children with special health needs, such as autism or ADHD. One interviewee said that the Family Center should do more to advertise the good work that it is doing to the broader community. She wanted more people to know about the program and to hear about the struggles that clients have faced, ultimately so more families can get help.

More people need to know about the Family Center; not only for funding, but bigger; this program can help more people. I believe that's the main goal – stability – not just with your home, but your whole life – children in school, life itself...We could have a family day where anyone in the community is welcome to come and we could speak to them...If I told 10 people [about the Family Center] and the next person tells 10 people – It may start small, but just imagine the growth.

Looking to the future

The last part of the discussions focused on the future, both how the Family Center has helped parents plan and if they are excited for what lies ahead.

Again, interviewees tended to cite the overall support they received from their case manager as being the most helpful for the future, as well as “being pushed” to move forward. Others talked about more tangible tools they learned, such as managing a budget or setting specific goals.

To be more organized is the best thing, such as learning how to budget and keep everything on track towards my bills.

We have something where we meet with [the Family Center] on a monthly basis to discuss goal setting and reaching our goals.

We set goals – 1, 5, 10 years - she had me write them down on a piece of paper. As I complete each goal, I write it down.

[My case manager] pushes me; she gives me the drive.

Some parents are excited about the future, which may include purchasing a house or repairing their credit, while others are nervous about what lies ahead, especially about leaving the Family Center program. Some mentioned that they worry about their overall self-sufficiency and being able to find the balance between asking for help and solving problems on their own. Given all that these families have been through, this trepidation is understandable. It is, therefore, important to ensure that families are well connected to other resources outside of the Family Center and to make certain they feel confident about their ability to access those connections.

Food shelf

In addition to the services described above, the Neighborhood House also supports two community food shelves – one in The Wellstone Center and the other at Francis Basket in Highland Park. In 2014, the food shelves served a total of 11,891 clients.

Clients served represented diverse racial and ethnic groups, with the largest proportion being Asian/Pacific Islander (45%). Two-thirds (67%) were below the federal poverty guideline (Figure 21). The majority of clients receiving food shelf support were from Ramsey County (91%), and 5 percent were from Dakota County.

21. Characteristics of clients served: Food shelves

	Number	Percentage
Gender (N=11,891)		
Female	6,272	53%
Male	5,598	47%
Missing data	21	<1%
Age (N=11,891)		
0-4 years	835	7%
5-9 years	1,440	12%
10-14 years	1,448	12%
15-17 years	838	7%
18-22 years	1,260	11%
23-54 years	4,791	40%
55 years and older	1,277	11%
Missing data	2	<1%
Race/ethnicity (N=11,891)		
Asian/Pacific Islander	5,310	45%
Hispanic/Chicano/Latino	2,679	23%
African American/Black	1,436	12%
Caucasian/White	1,084	9%
African	641	5%
Multiracial	422	4%
Native American/American Indian	194	2%
Other/Unknown	125	1%

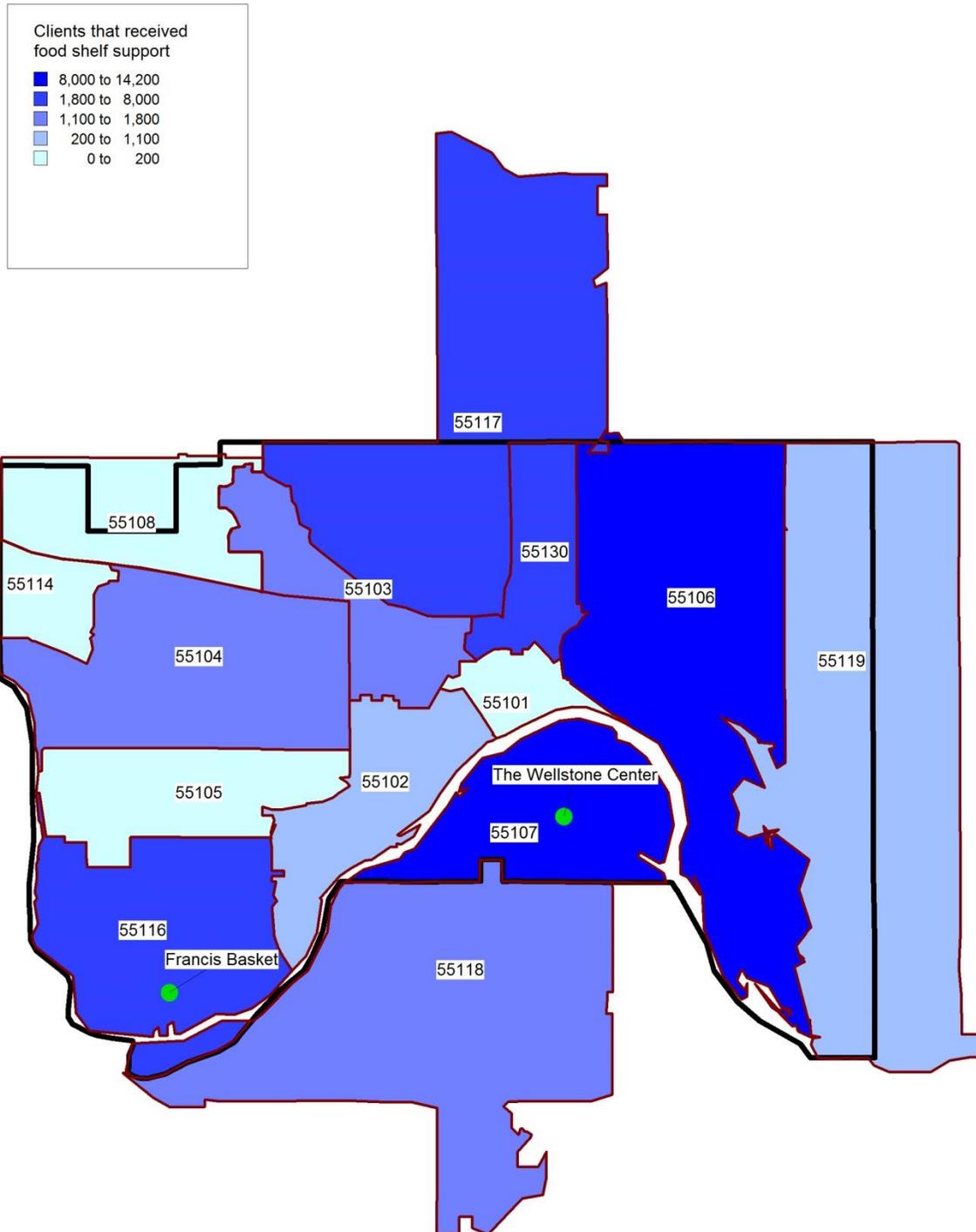
21. Characteristics of clients served: Food shelf (continued)

	Number	Percentage
Poverty level (N=12,989)^a		
Below 100% of poverty line	8,705	67%
Between 100%-200% of poverty line	1,158	9%
Above 200% of poverty line	431	3%
Missing data	2,695	21%
County (N=11,891)		
Anoka County	5	<1%
Dakota County	603	5%
Hennepin County	64	<1%
Ramsey County	10,855	91%
Washington County	36	<1%
Missing data	328	3%

^a Poverty Level is a duplicated number because clients move back and forth between categories, depending on their income situation.

Figure 22 illustrates where clients were living in Saint Paul when they received food shelf support. Readers should note that 1,189 clients were excluded from the map, because they were either missing zip code data or were located outside of Saint Paul (in a zip code with fewer than 100 households served).

22. Clients who received food shelf support, by zip code



Summary

The Family Center serves a large number of families who are experiencing economic distress, eviction and homelessness, poor mental health, and other serious issues. Generally speaking, clients tend to be low-income women between the ages of 23 and 54 years old with a wide variety of needs. In 2014, the Family Center received over 3,000 requests for assistance, mostly for rent, utilities (including power, water, and phone bills), damage deposits, and other issues related to housing. In addition, 87 clients called for assistance with MNSure, whereas, in 2013, only 12 people called to ask for assistance with health insurance.

Through its services, the majority of which are crisis-related, staff members work to connect families to community supports and provide them with a sense of stability and empowerment.

As seen in both the exit surveys and focus groups, clients of the Family Center are generally very satisfied with the services they have received, as well as the staff with whom they have worked.³ Staff members play a crucial role in helping families feel stable and empowered, and several clients mentioned how valuable Family Center staff members have been in helping them make improvements to their lives. In the interview discussions, parents said that, because of the assistance they received from the Family Center, their lives improved. Families are especially grateful to the Family Center staff for being supportive and “going above and beyond the call of duty.”

Most of the clients interviewed or surveyed could not think of any ways in which the Family Center could be improved. A few clients, during the exit survey, said they wanted quicker or better communication from Family Center staff. During discussions with case management clients, one parent suggested having more afterschool activities for children with special health needs.

Parents also talked about the difficulty of becoming self-sufficient; they are nervous about life beyond Family Center services and worry that their mental health or housing situation might deteriorate. Finding the balance between supporting families and empowering them to thrive on their own, using the skills they have learned, is difficult, but something the Family Center should consider as it moves forward.

³ The number of clients who participated in the exit survey or focus groups is smaller than those actually served by the Family Center; therefore, none of the responses should be considered representative of the whole population of clients.

Appendix

Client exit survey

Staff use only: Membership No. _____ Initial intake date: _____ Case closure date: _____

Family Center site: _____ Date survey completed: _____

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE FAMILY CENTERS ***Client Survey***

Please answer these questions. Your responses are confidential and will help the Neighborhood House Family Center strive to provide the best possible services.

For the following issues, please check the first box if you needed help in that area when you initially came to the Neighborhood House Family Center. If you needed help in an area, please check the second box if the Family Center provided services or referrals to you in that area.

	a. Needed help from the Family Center	b. Received services or referrals from the Family Center
Q-1. Rental assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-2. Mortgage foreclosure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-3. Utilities assistance (e.g., Xcel, water)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-4. Employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-5. Food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-6. Clothing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-7. Landlord/tenant problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-8. Conflict with neighbors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-9. Medical needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-10. Mental health needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-11. Chemical dependency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-12. Domestic abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q-13. Other (please specify): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q-14. Has your situation changed since you began receiving services from the Family Center? ¹ Yes ² No

14a. If yes, in what ways has it changed? _____

Q-15. We are interested in your experience with the Family Center. Please circle the number in the category that best describes your opinion (circle one number for each item):

	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied
a). How satisfied are you with the services that you received from the Family Center?	4	3	2	1
b). How satisfied are you with the Family Center's ability to help you with the needs you had when you initially came to the program?	4	3	2	1

Q-16. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (circle one number for each item):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
a). My family's basic needs are being met.	4	3	2	1	9
b). Friends, family, and/or neighbors provide support to me during times of need.	4	3	2	1	9
c). Family Center staff were knowledgeable and skilled.	4	3	2	1	9
d). Family Center staff were available to me when I needed them.	4	3	2	1	9
e). Family Center staff helped connect me with other community organizations, agencies, or classes that could help me with my situation.	4	3	2	1	9
f). I have received help for my situation from other community organizations, agencies, or classes since I first came to the Family Center (whether or not Family Center staff helped connect you with the resource).	4	3	2	1	9
g). Family Center staff helped me build a closer relationship with friends, family, and/or neighbors.	4	3	2	1	9
h). My situation has improved since I began receiving services from the Family Center.	4	3	2	1	9
i). Services I received from the Family Center helped me meet my family's basic needs.	4	3	2	1	9
j). I learned new strategies or obtained new resources since I first visited the Family Center that will help me if I face similar problems in the future.	4	3	2	1	9

Q-17. Since you started receiving services from the Family Center, have you contacted any other community agencies for help on your own, without the assistance of Family Center staff? This could include agencies Family Center staff referred you to, but that you contacted on your own. (check the one that most applies)

- ¹ Yes, I have contacted other community agencies on my own for help with my situation.
- ² No, but I would feel comfortable contacting other community agencies on my own.
- ³ No, and I do not feel comfortable contacting other community agencies on my own.

Please continue questionnaire on following page. ➔

Q-18. Overall, how helpful would you say services from the Family Center have been in improving your situation?
(check one)

- ¹ Very helpful
- ² Somewhat helpful
- ³ Not at all helpful

Q-19. How could services provided by the Family Center be improved?

Q-20. Additional comments: _____

Thank you!

Focus group protocol

February 19, 2015

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group. The Family Center is interested in hearing from you about your experience in their programs. The organization I work for, Wilder Research, is gathering information from parents such as yourselves about how the program has impacted your families, and what, if any, changes you'd like to see to the program.

Your participation in this focus group is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with any organization/agency your child receives services from.

If you prefer not to answer any of the questions I ask, it is okay to skip them. Your responses will be kept confidential. Only Wilder Research staff will have access to your individual responses. Please be respectful of everyone's comments today and keep their thoughts confidential as well. As a thank you for participating in this focus group, you will receive a \$20 gift card to Target.

Program impact

- How did you hear about the Family Center?
- What kinds of things did your family need help with when you came to the Family Center?
- Do you feel like your family's life is different now than when you first started working with the Family Center? In what ways?

Case management

- What kinds of things did the case management program help you, your children, or your family with? [PROBE: What about housing-related needs, such as finding housing, help with utilities, or resolving a conflict with your landlord? What about help with keeping your children out of Child Protection?]
 - (If needed): How did program staff help with this?
- Of the things program staff helped your child/family with, what one thing do you think helped the most? Why?
- Has the program helped your child(ren) be successful in school? How or how not?

Looking forward

- What do you like most about the services you receive through the Family Center?
- Were there services your family needed that you did not get from the program? If yes, what else did you need?
- In what ways has the program helped prepare you and your family for the future? What were the most important lessons you learned through the program/staff?
- What are you most excited about for the future?