

## The Community Café Approach

Families Partnering with Communities & Organizations to Strengthen Families

Community Café conversations 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 being used in diverse communities across the country and is endorsed by the Children's Bureau Administration for Children and Families.

### ***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

### ***Community Café Partnerships that Strengthen Families and Youth:***

Improved parent/staff relationships (bonding and bridging social capital)

Increased information sharing

Increased family leadership in community, practice, and policy

Parents as partners in formal service systems

People working together to build protective and promotive factors in the context of community culture, what is working well, and strengths.

Participants of all ages are valuable contributors to their community dream.

Voices of marginalized communities represented in program and policy change.

### ***How Do Community Cafés Build Community?***

The approach is based on a theory of change that values meaningful conversations.

Parents mentor other parents in leadership activities

Cafés are designed by Family Leaders who relate to current issues in the context of their neighborhood.

Appreciative Inquiry ensures a continuous improvement mindset.

Culturally relevant invitations, activities and Café space means a welcoming, inclusive environment.

Group wisdom and strengths are the basis for growth.

Participants are equal contributors to conversations where the sharing of strengths and personal experience build relationships that create community change.

Conversations focus on building protective factors and youth promotive factors that relate to all families.

“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 2011)