Anoka County
Foster Care Recruitment
and the
Connected Kids Initiative

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Growth in areas like Child Protection had fueled the demand for more alternative placements for children, but seeing decline in Family Foster Care.
How it all began…

PHASE I

Traditional Foster Care in decline.

A conversation between Anoka County Leadership and a local pastor.

Dreamed up a vision of working together to help kids thrive.
Partners with a Purpose

Eagle Brook Church - Resourcing/Recruitment
Safe Families for Children - Messaging & Early Intervention
YMCA - Youth Transition
Anoka County - Traditional Foster Care
Step 1: Safe Families offers to help county identify/recruit foster families while recruiting for host homes through local churches.

Step 2: Asks County to provide welcoming experience to faith community.

Step 3: As host and foster homes are approved, Safe Families offers to continue recruitment.

Step 4: County, SFFC, YMCA, mutually support and offer feedback as recruitment for homes launches.
Legislation 2017

…..to find good, safe...

…”from the general fund to the commissioner of human services in fiscal year 2018 for a grant to Anoka County to establish and promote family foster care recruitment models.”
The Local Church is part of the community that can respond and provide help.

The ability to recruit volunteers & offer support

Child abuse & neglect
Wards of the state
Juvenile Corrections - Youth
Kids in foster care
Homeless families, kids & youth
Sex Trafficking
Mental Health & addiction
Connected Kids Initiative

Phase II

- Informal Group
- Shared Common Goals
- Creative

Every kid in every community should have relationships and support to thrive.
What Drives us.....

Mobilizing the Faith Community to respond to the growing needs of kids:

- Honesty
- Compassion
- Flexibility
- Shared Ownership
- Focused
- Justice
- Inclusiveness
Together...

Message Reframed

- Awareness
- Need
- Mission
Faith Community Participation Model

A Circle of Support

- Safe Families for Children
- Encourage and support families in need and families caring for the child
- Help families in need reach their goals & work closely with Safe Families staff
- Safe Families Church
- Family in Crisis
- Voluntarily host children in your home on a temporary basis
- Provide goods & services to families in need
Building off the Energy!

- Community Awareness and Advocacy
- County Website
- CKI Website & Tool Kit
- Foster Care support activities
- County Online orientation
- Safe Families group church engagement
- The Reel Hope Project videos
Results

- Community Awareness
- Volunteer Interest
- Sustainability
Child Foster Care - Orientation
Child Foster Care - Applications

- 2016
- 2017
- 2018 YTD

Child Foster Care - Applications
Or another way to say it…

- 180 Churches Contacted
- 17% of Anoka Churches said YES
- 8 Churches have implemented
- More interested – timing
Lessons Learned
County

- Faith Organizations need to be involved to help us address and solve our Community problems!
- County Support and active participation is essential to engage non-traditional partnerships.
- Connected Kids Initiative is an important concept and communication vehicle that allows governmental agencies and faith organizations to talk about their common goals.
- Need to expand to wide network of Faith Communities.
Lessons Learned

Faith Community

- Missionally driven
- 100+ years of transactional approaches (food drives, backpack drives, etc)
- Needs clear pathways towards engagement
- Usually 10% congregation response. This model allows for majority to respond.
- Needs county leadership encouragement and invites to be a leader in the community in this way.
Future Steps

Local Economics

Safe Families builds partnership with local workforce center for parent referrals.

Safe Families bring education to local business owners to invest in 1 child ($1500) and encourage local workforce partnership to expand economic opportunities for workforce and parents in crisis.

Child Protection

Safe Families and County work together for potential referrals – case identification determined out of feedback from Public Health & Child Services.
CKI ToolKit

Connected Kids Initiative

Bringing Hope to our Kids and Families

County Agency Edition
Questions?

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HOPE

They're our kids. Your kids.

We mobilize faith communities all over Minnesota to bring hope and change to the child welfare system.
Thank You!