

# Reading for Healthy Families Year 3: Summary of Findings



*Submitted to:*

**Mickey Lansing**  
Executive Director  
Oregon Commission on Children and Families  
530 Center St. NE, Suite 100  
Salem, OR 97301

*Submitted by:*

**Jerod M. Tarte, M.A.**  
**Ashley M. Snoddy**  
**Beth L. Green, Ph.D.**

**July 2011**



5100 SW Macadam Ave., Suite 575  
Portland, OR 97239  
(503) 243-2436  
[www.npcresearch.com](http://www.npcresearch.com)



# Reading for Healthy Families Summary of Year 3 Evaluation Findings

*Submitted by*

NPC Research

*Research Team*

Jerod M. Tarte, M.A.

Ashley M. Snoddy

Beth L. Green, Ph.D.

For questions about this report or project, please contact Jerod Tarte at  
(503) 243-2436 x 103, or [tarte@npcresearch.com](mailto:tarte@npcresearch.com).

July 2011

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NPC Research would like to thank the following members of the Reading for Healthy Families project team for their hard work and contributions to this report:

- Susan Lindauer, Oregon Commission on Children and Families
- Katie Anderson, Oregon State Library
- Christi Peeples, Oregon Commission on Children and Families
- Joann Contini, RFHF Project Coordinator
- Renea Arnold, Multnomah County Library
- Karen Van Tassell, Family Building Blocks
- Heather McNeil, Youth Services Coordinator-Deschutes Public Library

We also wish to thank the participating children's librarians and Healthy Start Family Support Workers for providing data described in this report.

Thanks to Charley Korn, Anna Malsch, and Rachel Philofsky at NPC for their assistance in reviewing and preparing this report.

Finally, thanks to all the participating families for allowing their data and information to be shared in this report.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**R**eading for Healthy Families (RFHF) is a partnership of the Oregon State Library and the Oregon Commission on Children and Families supported by collaborative grants from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation and The Oregon Community Foundation.

The goal of the RFHF project is to train Healthy Start Family Support Workers (FSWs) and children's library staff to implement the Every Child Ready to Read @ your Library® early literacy curriculum in their work with parents. By training staff to deliver this curriculum to parents, it is expected that parents, in turn, will improve their ability to foster early literacy development in their children.

- Prior to the RFHF Training, only 27% (24% of FSWs and 32% of librarians) of the participants reported having received training in early literacy curriculum in the past 2 years.



### Program Implementation

The goal of the RFHF project is to train 300 Healthy Start FSWs and children's library staff. Further, it is expected that within 12 months of the final RFHF training (by approximately April 2012), these staff will present the RFHF curriculum to 4,500 families (15 families per staff) in Oregon. During the first 3 years of the project (the period covered by this report):

- 175 FSWs and 117 children's librarians participated in one of the 13 RFHF curriculum trainings<sup>1</sup> provided at the time of this report.
  - A total of 292 staff or 97% of expected, have been trained.
- Children's librarians presented 2,281 education sessions to approximately 1,886<sup>2</sup> families (about 1 session per family and 17 families per librarian). FSWs presented 5,225 education sessions to 1,428 unique Healthy Start families (about 4 sessions per family and 8 families per worker) since attending the RFHF training.
  - A total of 3,314 families (74% of expected), have received an education session.
  - It is important to note that staff trained during Year 3 have not had a full 12 months of time to deliver education sessions to 15 families. Future data reports should show more families served, as the Year 3 participants reach additional families.
- When asked if they would continue presenting the curriculum once their program requirements were met, 65% of trained staff said they would be willing to continue.

<sup>1</sup> Additionally, staff from two community agencies not part of the current RFHF project send staff to audit the training, including three staff from Coos County Even Start and one staff from Lane County Relief Nursery.

<sup>2</sup> The number of families is a "best guess." Librarians were not required to keep actual names of families served, so it is difficult to know from the library logs how many families were recorded multiple times.

- Approximately 10 months following training, self-reported improvements were greatest in the following areas:
  - For FSW's, encouraging families to check out books from the library increased by 80%.
  - For librarians, providing book lists and early literacy brochures to families increased by 73% as did the frequency of early literacy training for parents, childcare providers and teachers (73% increase).

## Service Delivery

Of the 5,225 education sessions presented by trained children's librarians and FSWs, the most frequently presented education session reported was "Print Motivation" (37%) followed by "Reading Books" (26%). The average duration of the presentations was about 15 minutes a session for FSWs, and 30 minutes a session for librarians.

Trained staff varied in which sessions they felt were easiest to present. Most FSWs (86%) found "Reading Books" the easiest education session to present and most engaging for parents (89%), whereas children's librarians felt most comfortable presenting "Print Motivation" (73%) and that it was most engaging for families (87%).

### Giveaway Books & Library Outreach Funds

- In all, 2,584 unique families received a total of 3,692 books. Approximately 80% of Healthy Start families and 77% of library families were presented with at least one "giveaway book."
- Based on self-reports of staff completing the post-training survey, 71% felt that the family/child seemed interested/excited in the giveaway book. Further, many (67%) felt that the giveaway book "corresponded well" to the education being presented to the family.
- According to reports from the RFHF Program Coordinator, 22 Healthy Start programs and 30 libraries in 23 different counties (64% of trained counties) submitted a plan for using library outreach funds. The use of funds included:
  - Transportation vouchers (gas cards, bus tickets) so that families can have access to the library,
  - Offsetting fees for a library card some families have to pay because of their address proximity to the library,
  - Reducing/eliminating existing library fines for families who are prevented from checking out materials,
  - Reimbursing staff mileage for travel to family groups in which presentations about early literacy were delivered

## Agency Partnerships

- 95% of FSWs reported partnering with the local library ‘at least once’ when providing literacy information to families. 53% reported partnering ‘once a month’ or more.
- 97% of children’s librarians reported partnering with a Healthy Start representative when providing literacy information to families. 74% reported partnering ‘once a month’ or more.
  - The average number of participants reporting partnerships (96%) increased substantially from last year’s report (in which 70% reported partnerships).

Staff described a number of both advantages and obstacles developing partnerships between Healthy Start and the State Library on the RFHF project. Common advantages to the partnerships included:

- Reaching families that wouldn’t otherwise become engaged with the library,
- The opportunity for families to participate in library events and other resources offered by the library and/or share in the events of the other agency,
- The professional relationship-building that occurred among staff in the two agencies, and
- The opportunity for families to receive multiple sources of education around early literacy.

Staff also discussed obstacles they encountered that hindered their partnerships, including:

- The time and coordination efforts that needed to occur (for both library and Healthy Start staff) in order to hold a simultaneous event or coordinate a library visit with a Healthy Start family,
- Feeling that the other agency in the partnership was not interested in partnering together, and
- Other barriers such as families disinterest in the library, language barriers, and/or obstacles families faced in obtaining a library card.

## Child and Family Outcomes

In order to determine the effect of the RFHF education sessions on families; early literacy behavior, Parent Survey responses were compared for parents who had received at least one RFHF Education Session versus those who had not received an education session. Parent surveys are completed every six months by parents participating in the Healthy Start program, and provided confidentially to NPC for analysis. Results found that families whose FSWs presented the RFHF curriculum to them were significantly more likely to be engaged in several key early literacy activities that are the focus of the RFHF project compared to families who have not received RFHF education sessions. Specifically, parents who received at least one RFHF education session were significantly more likely to:

- Tell stories and talk about activities with their child
- Read or look at books together with their child
- Have a library card for their child
- Attend a story time at the library in the last month
- Check out materials from the library for their child

- Relate the story they are reading to something in the child's experience
- Have a child that pretends to read along (when parent reads with child, and
- Have a child participate in reading by asking questions, turning pages, or acting out parts of a book.

## Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholders offered their thoughts on the past three years of the RFHF project:

- Trainings not only provided new education to participants, but fostered a new partnership among Oregon agencies
- Implementing a new curriculum comes with its own set of challenges for staff, but supervisor support and inter-agency partnerships helped off-set some of the challenges
- Despite the end of project funding, multiple resources are in place to encourage sustainability of the project, including:
  - consultation from the Oregon State Library
  - a RFHF Web site with up-to-date project resources
  - an email list-serve for ongoing participant communication, and
  - a cadre of 35 community members certified as staff trainers in the curriculum

## Conclusions

Outcomes for RFHF show a number of successes including training 292 staff, presenting 5,225 education sessions to 3,314 families, and providing 3,692 books to 2,584 families. Librarians are reporting more available early literacy resources at their libraries including book lists and early literacy brochures as well as early literacy training for parents, childcare providers, and teachers. FSWs report that they are encouraging more families to check out materials from the library and help children notice print in books and in the world around them. These changes can help ensure sustainability of early literacy education to families.

Further, results show that families who received RFHF education sessions were significantly more likely to be engaged in several key early literacy activities as compared to families who had not been exposed to the curriculum.

Partnerships among the two agencies, despite the time consuming nature of partnerships, are occurring. The majority of FSWs and many librarians reported successfully partnering with the other agency at least once since their training. Staff believe these partnerships provide opportunities for parents to engage in library services they otherwise would not have sought out, introduce new families to the library, and provide professional support among librarians and FSWs in bringing early literacy to Oregon families.

## INTRODUCTION

**R**eading for Healthy Families (RFHF) is a partnership of the Oregon State Library and the Oregon Commission on Children and Families supported by collaborative grants from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation and The Oregon Community Foundation.

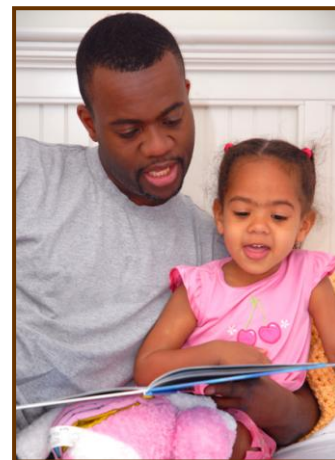
RFHF strives to ensure that every Oregon child entering kindergarten is ready to learn to read. The project teaches parents how to help their children develop early literacy skills that are critical components of school success.

Parents spend more time with their child than anyone else, and thus they have the greatest potential to impact their child's development and learning. The goal of the RFHF project is to train Healthy Start Family Support Workers (FSWs) and children's library staff to implement the Every Child Ready to Read @ your Library® curriculum in their work with parents. By training staff to deliver this curriculum to parents, it is expected that parents, in turn, will improve their ability to foster early literacy development in their children. After being trained in RFHF, FSWs and children's library staff will be better able to teach parents:

- What early literacy skills children need to have before kindergarten.
- How children learn those skills.
- How to read to babies and active young children.
- How to provide other experiences that develop early literacy skills.
- How to access resources that can help them support their children's early literacy.

RFHF training for Healthy Start Family Support Workers (FSWs) and children's library staff began in October 2008 and continued through April 2011. Staff participate in two trainings over a 4-month period. After June 2011, ongoing support for Healthy Start FSWs and children's library staff will be provided via Web site resources, an electronic discussion list, and consulting services provided by the State Library. Within 12 months of the final RFHF training, it is expected that 300 Healthy Start FSWs and children's library staff will have been trained and that they will have presented the RFHF curriculum to 4,500 families in Oregon.

The evaluation includes documentation of program implementation and outcomes. Indicators of program implementation include: the quality of training provided to participants, the number of participants trained, the number of families receiving training from the FSWs and librarians, and identification of any barriers and facilitators to delivering the curriculum to high-risk families. Parent outcomes that are tracked include the frequency of parent-child literacy activities, family engagement with books, and family use of library services.



## The Reading for Healthy Families Training Curriculum

Training session one was a 2-day training during which an adapted Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library (ECRR) curriculum<sup>3</sup> was presented by a standardized trainer. Volunteer Site Coordinators facilitated networking and communication for the attending FSWs and children’s library staff, as well as providing logistical recommendations and support to the RFHF project coordinator during the trainings. FSWs and children’s library staff practiced how to deliver Parent Education Sessions either during home visits or at library programs. Parent Education Sessions focused on six early literacy skills (describing why they are important and how children learn) and developmental skills (providing things parents can do with their children with books related to reading books, dialogic reading, and phonological awareness games) including:

“A big thank you goes out to you for coordinating such a great training. All of us really enjoyed the information presented.”  
~ Healthy Start Staff

- Print Motivation: a child’s interest in and enjoyment of books,
- Vocabulary: knowing the names of things to help children understand what they’ve read,
- Print Awareness: knowing how to follow the words on a page, and knowing how to handle a book,
- Narrative Skills: the ability to describe things and events, and to tell stories,
- Phonological Awareness: the ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words,
- Letter Knowledge: knowing that letters are different from each other, that they have different names and sounds,
- Reading Books: how to enjoy reading books by selecting age-appropriate books for the child,
- Dialogic Reading: how to read picture books with 2- and 3-year-olds to increase language development and develop pre-reading skills in children,
- Phonological Games: how to help children hear the different parts or syllables that make up words and to improve children’s ability to say whether or not two words have the same or different first sound.
- Early Brain Development: healthy brain development and how it relates to learning.

Approximately 4 months after Training Session One, participants reconvened for Training Session Two, another 2-day training including various special topic trainings including: bilingual language development, media literacy, working with special-needs children, and working with difficult to engage parents (Year 1), and working with families, early brain development and media literacy (Years 2 & 3). These special topics were specifically requested by participants during Training Session One. Healthy Start and library supervisors attended Training Session Two specifically to work on developing and strengthening partnerships between Healthy Start programs and local libraries including a special presentation on “The Basics of Partnerships, Advocacy and Marketing.” During the training, participants developed strategies designed to sustain their part-

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/ecrr/index.cfm>

nerships long term, and to improve the connections between the organizations. RFHF gave all supervisors Public Relations kits which were used in the training to review useful information on advocacy, fund development, and partnership-building for RFHF success. By the time of the second training, it was expected that participants would have presented at least one Parent Education Session to five families. Within a year of their initial training, each participant is expected to provide at least one Parent Education Session to 15 families.

By the end of Year 3, it was expected that 300 children’s librarians and FSWs would have attended the RFHF curriculum training. **To date, 292 staff—97% of expected—are trained.** Due to scheduling conflicts some staff were unable to make the original training for their county. Participants from “make up” trainings are counted in the total number of trained participants for their county regardless of their training cohort/year. Table 1 describes the number and program/library location of participants trained.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 1. Participants Trained**

| Counties Trained                             | Cohort | Year | # Children’s Librarians | # Family Support Workers |
|----------------------------------------------|--------|------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Washington                                   | 1      | 1    | 25                      | 25                       |
| Benton, Lincoln, Linn, Polk                  | 2      | 1    | 9                       | 16                       |
| Gilliam, Hood River, Sherman, Wasco, Wheeler | 3      | 1    | 10                      | 9                        |
| Grant, Harney, Morrow, Umatilla              | 4      | 1    | 11                      | 12                       |
| Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook, Yamhill        | 5      | 2    | 7                       | 10                       |
| Douglas, Lane                                | 6      | 2    | 8                       | 20                       |
| Coos, Curry                                  | 7      | 2    | 5                       | 5                        |
| Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake   | 8      | 2    | 15                      | 13                       |
| Multnomah                                    | 9      | 3    | 6                       | 25                       |
| Clackamas, Marion                            | 10     | 3    | 12                      | 23                       |
| Jackson, Josephine                           | 11     | 3    | 7                       | 11                       |
| Baker, Malheur, Union, Wallowa               | 12     | 3    | 2                       | 6                        |
| <b>Overall Total</b>                         |        |      | <b>117</b>              | <b>175</b>               |

<sup>4</sup> Additionally, staff from two community agencies not part of the current RFHF project sent staff to audit the trainings, including three staff from Coos County Even Start and one staff from Lane County Relief Nursery. These participants are not included in the participants training counts in Table 1.

## CERTIFIED EVERY CHILD READY TO READ TRAINING

During the course of the RFHF project there was an increased interest from members of the early childhood community to be part of the Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) training. A state level meeting during year 2 of the project culminated in an agreement to open the training to Oregon Registry trainers, Head Start, and the child care system. Thirty-five community members (representing libraries, Healthy Start programs, Head Start, child care resource and referral programs, child care centers, and independent trainers and consultants) received the training to become Every Child Ready to Read Standard Trainers.

At the ECRR Training of Trainers, participants received information about the RFHF project history, information about the Oregon Registry Professional Development/Training system, and ECRR curriculum and resources. The trainers met the state of Oregon child care and education criteria for certified Oregon Registry ECRR Standardized trainers. As a certified ECRR trainer, these community members are now able to provide ECRR workshops to any audience in any Oregon location.



## EVALUATION / METHODS

### Training Surveys

At the beginning of the first training, children’s librarians and FSWs were asked to complete a pre-training survey. This survey was designed to assess participants’ initial understanding of developmental milestones as they relate to early literacy, to allow participants to describe other trainings they had recently received in early literacy, and to either describe activities their library currently offered in order to engage children in the library (library participants) or describe early literacy activities that currently took place with families (FSWs). Post-training surveys are sent to all participants approximately 10 months after the date of their first training. Data comparing participants’ knowledge and behavior at pretest to follow-up are reported in results.

“It has been a wonderful project. Certainly challenging at times but overall I think that it has been a great success and has had an impact on the way that FSWs and libraries go about their work even if it is just changing how FSWs use books with their families or how librarians have a greater understanding of high-risk families.”

~ RFHF Stakeholder

### Delivery of Family Education Sessions

During the first four months after the initial training, all trained participants were expected to present any one of the early literacy Parent Education Sessions to five families. Within a year of the initial training, participants were expected to provide early literacy education to a total of 15 families. Two processes were implemented in order to monitor the number of families being presented the early literacy education curriculum.

First, because FSWs are already required to complete evaluation forms monitoring families’ progress, an additional form for reporting Parent Education Sessions was added to existing data collection procedures. This Service Delivery Log, (a.k.a., “pink sheet”) submitted to the evaluation team monthly, identifies the family by their Healthy Start ID number,<sup>5</sup> and describes whether or not an Education Session was presented during any home visit during the month. The form records the duration of the Education Session, whether or not the family received a free book, and whether the family received a transportation voucher to get to the library.

Librarians record parallel information on an Excel spreadsheet. These spreadsheets are electronically submitted monthly to the State Library. The RFHF coordinator at the State Library compiles and shares information submitted on the spreadsheets with the evaluation team. Information on the number of families receiving RFHF Parent Education Sessions is presented in Results.

### Parent Survey

As part of the Healthy Start evaluation, parents complete a survey when their child starts the program (typically at birth), and again when their child is 6 months, 12 months, 24 months, 36 months, 48 months, and 60<sup>6</sup> months old. In order for families to provide more information about early literacy activities they are doing with their child, the evaluation team added additional

<sup>5</sup> Healthy Start families are identified to the evaluation team using a unique Healthy Start ID number; family names are not disclosed to the evaluation team on surveys.

<sup>6</sup> Many Healthy Start programs only serve children through age 3 years.

questions to the existing Parent Survey (for children ages 6 months and older). In addition to existing questions asking about the frequency of telling stories and reading books, the revised Parent Survey asks parents whether they have a library card, and how often they have attended a story time, checked out materials from the library, engaged in certain early literacy activities with their child, and how their child responds to early literacy activities. Note that these outcomes are tracked only for parents served by the Healthy Start program. Results from the Parent Surveys are described below.

## Stakeholder Interviews

Each year of the project, the evaluation team conducts either focus groups or interviews with those involved in the RFHF project. In Year 1, children’s librarians and in Year 2, FSWs trained in the curriculum were invited to participate in the focus groups. In Year 3, the project stakeholders were interviewed for their thoughts about project implementation success and challenges. Results from the Year 3 interviews are presented in Results.<sup>7</sup>




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<sup>7</sup> Results from Year 1 and Year 2 focus appear in earlier evaluation reports ([www.npcresearch.com](http://www.npcresearch.com)).

## RESULTS

### Pre-Training Surveys

#### FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS PRE-TRAINING SURVEY

At the time of analysis, 166 (of the 175 trained) FSWs completed the pre-training survey on the first day of the training. Of those, approximately 24% (39 FSWs) reported having participated in at least one other early literacy curriculum training in the past 2 years.

When asked which activities they engaged in most frequently with families, it was clear that many FSWs were already engaged in literacy activities with families. The majority of FSWs (87%) reported that they provide opportunities for babies to explore books, and many reported that they read with children (84%), encourage families to check out books from the library (80%) and help children learn how to hold or open a book (77%). However, few FSWs reported helping children notice print (43%), inviting children to participate in stories by asking questions (40%), or present material designed to help children identify and learn letters (24%). While FSWs traditionally work with younger (0-3) children, for whom some of the activities may not be age appropriate, these results provide useful information about some areas in which FSW practices related to early literacy supports could be strengthened. Table 2 describes the frequency of activities FSWs reported engaging in with children and families.

**Table 2. FSW Pre-Training Reports of Current Activities with Families**

| Activities currently engaged in with families                                                                                                                                                      | Percent doing activity frequently or very frequently |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Provide opportunities for babies to chew on, pat, grab, and play with books                                                                                                                        | 87%                                                  |
| Read with children 0-2 years old                                                                                                                                                                   | 84%                                                  |
| Encourage families to check out books from the library                                                                                                                                             | 80%                                                  |
| Help children learn how to hold or open a book and let them practice handling a book                                                                                                               | 77%                                                  |
| Sing songs, do finger-plays, say nursery rhymes, or play phonological games to help children hear and play with smaller sounds in words                                                            | 70%                                                  |
| Identify items in pictures and ask “what” questions to help children learn new words and their meanings                                                                                            | 63%                                                  |
| Ask children open-ended questions when reading to them                                                                                                                                             | 57%                                                  |
| Invite children to participate in stories by asking them to help you list items in cumulative stories, do a hand motion during the refrain of repetitive stories, or act out the story in some way | 44%                                                  |
| Help children notice print in books and in the world around them                                                                                                                                   | 43%                                                  |
| Invite children to describe things and activities in their own lives to practice telling stories and ask follow-up questions to expand their narrative skills                                      | 40%                                                  |
| Identify letters, talk about their similarities and differences, and ask children questions about letters to help them learn about letters                                                         | 24%                                                  |

**LIBRARY STAFF PRE-TRAINING SURVEY**

One hundred and nineteen<sup>8</sup> staff attending the RFHF training completed the librarian pre-training survey. Approximately 32% (38 librarians) reported having participated in at least one other early literacy curriculum training in the past 2 years.

When asked which activities their library offers to young children, the majority of librarians reported that they provide family story time (87%) and age-specific story time (84%). Additionally, many (83%) reported that they provide book lists and early literacy brochures for parents and most have a preschool component to their summer reading program (80%). Few staff (14%) reported their library as having an audio book center. These results, while demonstrating that many libraries provide multiple activities for families, also provide useful information about identifying additional areas libraries can provide additional support to families. Table 3 describes the frequency of activities libraries offered to young children.

**Table 3. Librarian Pre-Training Reports of Current Activities for Young Children**

| Activities currently provided by the library                                                                                                                                             | Percent doing activity |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Family story times for parents to bring children 0-5 years old                                                                                                                           | 87%                    |
| Age specific story times (baby lap-sit, toddler time, preschool story time)                                                                                                              | 84%                    |
| Book lists and early literacy brochures, handouts, and bookmarks are located in a highly visible spot and available for parents to take                                                  | 83%                    |
| Preschool component to the summer reading program for children 0-5 years old who listen to books read aloud by their caregivers                                                          | 80%                    |
| Special programs appropriate for children 0-5 years old: baby signs, puppet shows, musical guests, holiday or special occasion events                                                    | 79%                    |
| Educational toys (puppets, doll house, puzzles, table-top toys, etc.)                                                                                                                    | 73%                    |
| Library cards for everyone (babies, toddlers, and preschoolers too!)                                                                                                                     | 72%                    |
| Outreach to childcare providers, preschool teachers, or Healthy Start where you present story times, provide early literacy training, circulated library books or other service          | 71%                    |
| Computer designated for children with early literacy games for children 4-5 years old                                                                                                    | 64%                    |
| Book and activity kits containing a variety of material (books, DVD, music CD, toys, etc.) on a particular topic such as animals, transportation, going to the doctor, or making friends | 63%                    |
| Bilingual programs/programs in other languages                                                                                                                                           | 49%                    |
| Early literacy training for parents, childcare providers, and teachers                                                                                                                   | 45%                    |
| New baby kits to all children born in your community (kits may include early literacy information, library information, library card application, free book, etc.)                       | 35%                    |
| Audio book center (cassette/CD player, headphones, and space to sit to listen to and look at books)                                                                                      | 14%                    |

<sup>8</sup> According to training data, only 117 children librarians have been trained. It is possible that the librarian pre-survey was completed by two FSWs or staff from other agencies and submitted on the wrong form in error.

## Post-Training Surveys

Approximately ten months after their initial training, all participants (trained in Years 1 & 2) were emailed a link to complete a post-training web-based survey. The survey inquired about the literacy activities participants had been doing with families, knowledge about key early literacy activities and child development, which resources participants found helpful, and participants' experiences partnering with other agencies. Multiple follow-up emails were sent to staff, encouraging them to complete the survey.

Surveys were completed by 110 staff, culminating in an overall 60% response rate. Some staff, however, had left their positions and therefore could not be reached to complete the posttest. Of the post-training surveys completed, 91 (83%) were able to be reliably matched to pre-training surveys. Those surveys unable to be matched were because (1) a pre-training survey was not submitted, or (2) a participant used a different name or worker ID number on the two different surveys.

"At the end of the presentation I asked if there were any questions...and [a mom's] face lit up and she said, "Wait, so my kid gets ALL of THAT from just reading a book for fun?" and I said, "Yup, pretty much. It's that simple."

~ Children's Librarian

### AGE-APPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

On both the pre- and post-training survey, children's librarians and FSWs were asked to identify the age range most appropriate to begin 8 different early literacy activities with children. On the pre-training survey, the most accurately described activities included:

- 100% of family support workers indicating reading a picture/board book to a child was appropriate for children as young as 0-12,
- 100% of children's librarians indicating reading a picture/board book to a child was appropriate for children as young as 0-12 (however, this decreased to 94% on the post-test),
- 100% of family support workers indicating encouraging a child to babble and mimic sounds was appropriate for children as young as 0-12,
- 98% of children's librarians indicating encouraging a child to babble and mimic sounds as appropriate for children as young as 0-12 (however, this decreased to 91% on the post-test).

In general, on both the pre- and post-training surveys, participants under-estimated the ages that children could be expected to engage in early literacy activities (with one exception noted below). Improvements in identifying the most appropriate age to begin early literacy activities occurred in the following areas:

- 39% of family support workers and 28% of children's librarians correctly identified 49+ months as the ideal age to ask a child to think of a word that rhymes with another (up from 36% and 11%, respectively),
- 33% of family support workers and 46% of children's librarians correctly identified 37-48 months as the most appropriate age to look at the cover of a book with a child and ask the child what he/she thinks the book will be about (up from 18% and 14%, respectively),

Interestingly, both groups of participants tended to be less accurate, over time, in reporting the age at which it is most appropriate to ask a child to read you a story to see if he/she knows how

to handle a book. Eighteen percent of FSWs and 33% of children’s librarians felt the most appropriate age to start this activity should be older than the suggested 25-36 month age range.

It is important to consider that different children may have the ability to engage in different literacy activities at different developmental stages, however, the stages and activities described on the survey are typical of those discussed in the RFHF curriculum trainings. Further, it may be that because of the lag between receiving the training and the follow-up survey, participants were less likely to recall these age-specific details. Table 4 describes the ages participants identified for being appropriate to begin the various early literacy activities.



**Table 4. Participants Identification of Appropriate Ages for Early Literacy Activities**

| Activity                                                                               | Participant | n  | Pre-Survey | Post Survey |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----|------------|-------------|
|                                                                                        |             |    | % Correct  | % Correct   |
| Read a picture/board book to a child                                                   | FSW         | 40 | 100%       | 100%        |
|                                                                                        | Library     | 46 | 100%       | 94%         |
| Encourage a child to babble and mimic sounds                                           | FSW         | 40 | 100%       | 100%        |
|                                                                                        | Library     | 44 | 98%        | 91%         |
| Ask a child to think of a word that rhymes with another                                | FSW         | 39 | 36%        | 39%         |
|                                                                                        | Library     | 46 | 11%        | 28%         |
| Ask child to name objects in illustrations                                             | FSW         | 40 | 13%        | 25%         |
|                                                                                        | Library     | 45 | 11%        | 16%         |
| Look at a cover of a book and ask the child what he/she thinks the story will be about | FSW         | 40 | 18%        | 33%         |
|                                                                                        | Library     | 44 | 14%        | 46%         |
| Ask a child to read you a story to see if he/she knows how to handle a book            | FSW         | 40 | 30%        | 13%         |
|                                                                                        | Library     | 44 | 34%        | 23%         |
| As a child to tell you a story                                                         | FSW         | 38 | 13%        | 13%         |
|                                                                                        | Library     | 45 | 7%         | 24%         |
| Ask a child to point out specific letters in text                                      | FSW         | 39 | 8%         | 10%         |
|                                                                                        | Library     | 44 | 2%         | 16%         |

#### **PARTICIPANT CHANGES IN EARLY LITERACY ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

Children’s librarians and FSWs reported engaging in a number of early literacy activities with children and families on the pre-training survey (see Tables 2 and 3 above). Participants were also asked to report the frequency of these same activities on the post-training survey. An increase in frequency of activity suggests that participants are spending more time on these important early literacy related opportunities.

FSWs were asked to rate the frequency (on a 5 point scale of very infrequently to very frequently) of 11 activities they may be doing as part of their work with families. Participants reporting that they engaged in activities “very frequently” ranged from 10% (identify and talk about letters) to 75% (encourage families to check out books from the library, provide opportunities for babies to play with books). Of those participants with room for improvement, the greatest percent improvements were seen in encouraging the family to check out books from the library

(80%) and helping children notice print in books and in the world around them (60%). Ten months after the initial training, 95% of participants encouraged families to check out books from the library, and 88% provided opportunities for babies to play with books. One area in which FSWs may benefit from additional training is in working with families to “identify and talk about letters”—only 25% of the FSWs were reporting this activity “very frequently.” Table 5 describes the number of FSWs reporting they “very frequently” engaged in the early literacy activity prior to the curriculum training, the number of FSWs with room for improvement (those participants who were not engaged in those activities “very frequently” prior to the training) and the proportion of those who improved (by increasing their participation in those activities).

**Table 5. FSWs Engaged in Early Literacy Activities “Very Frequently”**

| Activity                                                                      | N  | FSWs Reporting “Very Frequent” activity | FSWs with “Room for Improvement” |                      | Total FSW’s reporting “Very Frequent” activity <sup>9</sup> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                               |    |                                         | N                                | Percent (N) improved |                                                             |
| Sing songs, do finger plays, or play phonological games                       | 40 | 45% (18)                                | 22                               | 55% (12)             | 75% (30)                                                    |
| Encourage families to check out books from the library                        | 40 | 75% (30)                                | 10                               | 80% (8)              | 95% (38%)                                                   |
| Identify items in pictures and ask “what” questions                           | 40 | 33% (13)                                | 27                               | 30% (8)              | 53% (21)                                                    |
| Help children notice print in books and in the world around them              | 40 | 25% (10)                                | 30                               | 60% (18)             | 70% (28)                                                    |
| Invite children to participate in stories by acting out the story in some way | 40 | 25% (10)                                | 30                               | 37% (11)             | 53% (21)                                                    |
| Help children practice handling a book                                        | 40 | 60% (24)                                | 16                               | 56% (9)              | 83% (33)                                                    |
| Provide opportunities for babies to play with books                           | 40 | 75% (30)                                | 10                               | 50% (5)              | 88% (35)                                                    |
| Invite children to describe things and activities to practice telling stories | 40 | 23% (9)                                 | 31                               | 26% (8)              | 43% (17)                                                    |
| Read with children 0-2 years old                                              | 40 | 68% (27)                                | 13                               | 46% (6)              | 83% (33)                                                    |
| Ask children open-ended questions when reading to them                        | 40 | 42% (18)                                | 22                               | 59% (13)             | 78% (31)                                                    |
| Identify and talk about letters                                               | 39 | 10% (4)                                 | 35                               | 17% (6)              | 25% (10)                                                    |

<sup>9</sup> Includes FSWs who reported engaging in the activity either on the pre or post survey

Children’s librarians were asked to rate whether or not their library currently provided any of 14 early literacy activities for children 0-5 and/or their families. Participants reporting that their library provided the activity ranged from 10% (audio book center) to 88% (family story times for parents to bring children 0-5 years old). Of those participants whose libraries had room for improvement, the greatest percent improvements were seen in book lists and early literacy brochures (73%), and early literacy trainings for parents, childcare providers and teachers (73%). Ten months after the initial training, 94% of librarians reported their libraries had family story times as well as book lists and early literacy brochures. Few librarians reported that their library had an audio book center (26%).

Table 6 describes the number of children’s librarians reporting their library offered the early literacy activity prior to the curriculum training, the number of librarians whose libraries had room for improvement, and the proportion of those who improved (by offering the activity).

**Table 6. Children’s Librarians Reporting in Early Literacy Activities at Their Library**

| Activity                                                               | N  | Librarians reporting library provided activity | Librarians with “Room for Improvement” |                      | Total librarians reporting activity at library <sup>10</sup> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                        |    |                                                | N                                      | Percent (N) improved |                                                              |
| Family story-times                                                     | 49 | 88% (43)                                       | 6                                      | 50% (3)              | 94% (46)                                                     |
| Book lists and early literacy brochures                                | 49 | 78% (38)                                       | 11                                     | 73% (8)              | 94% (46)                                                     |
| Age specific story-times                                               | 49 | 76% (37)                                       | 12                                     | 42% (5)              | 86% (42)                                                     |
| Early literacy training for parents, childcare providers, and teachers | 49 | 47% (23)                                       | 26                                     | 73% (19)             | 86% (42)                                                     |
| Outreach to childcare providers, preschool teachers or Healthy Start   | 49 | 69% (34)                                       | 15                                     | 60% (9)              | 88% (43)                                                     |
| Preschool component to Summer Reading Program                          | 49 | 84% (41)                                       | 8                                      | 50% (4)              | 92% (45)                                                     |
| Book and activity kits                                                 | 49 | 67% (33)                                       | 16                                     | 31% (5)              | 78% (38)                                                     |
| Special programs appropriate for children 0-5                          | 49 | 71% (35)                                       | 14                                     | 29% (4)              | 80% (39)                                                     |
| Computer designated for children with early literacy games             | 49 | 61% (30)                                       | 19                                     | 37% (7)              | 76% (37)                                                     |
| Educational toys                                                       | 49 | 74% (36)                                       | 13                                     | 31% (4)              | 82% (40)                                                     |

<sup>10</sup> Includes librarians who reported engaging in the activity either on the pre or post survey

| Activity                                             | N  | Librarians reporting library provided activity | Librarians with “Room for Improvement” |                      | Total librarians reporting activity at library <sup>10</sup> |
|------------------------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                      |    |                                                | N                                      | Percent (N) improved |                                                              |
| Library cards for everyone                           | 49 | 76% (37)                                       | 12                                     | 33% (4)              | 84% (41)                                                     |
| Audio book center                                    | 49 | 10% (5)                                        | 44                                     | 18% (8)              | 26% (13)                                                     |
| New baby kits to all children born in your community | 49 | 31% (15)                                       | 34                                     | 6% (2)               | 35% (17)                                                     |
| Bilingual programs/programs in other languages       | 49 | 55% (27)                                       | 22                                     | 5% (1)               | 57% (28)                                                     |

### EFFECTIVENESS OF RFHF MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

On the post-training survey, FSWs and children’s librarians (trained in Years 1 & 2) were asked to consider the effectiveness of 14 different resources made available to trained participants as part of the RFHF curriculum training.

“I’ve always wanted to do more with literacy in home visits. Now I have the backing to do so!”  
~ Healthy Start Staff

FSWs rating the following materials and resources as the most effective in working with families:

- Giveaway books (93%)
- Children’s books for illustrating concepts (non-giveaway) (69%)

Children’s librarians had slightly different ratings for the materials and resources they felt were most effective in their work with families. These included:

- Giveaway books (82%)
- RFHF workshop handouts (78%)
- RFHF workshop scripts (61%)
- Six-skills mini-posters (61%)

The majority of materials and resources were described as effective by the participants. However, these groups also slightly differed in what they believed were the least effective resource in working with families. Of the FSWs, RFHF workshop scripts (24%), six-skills mini posters (14%), local library information/card application (14%), early literacy DVDs (14%) and the library outreach/travel voucher (14%) were least effective. Children’s librarians rated the library outreach/travel voucher as least effective (14%).<sup>11</sup> Table 7 describes the proportion of participants describing each material/resource as most effective/least effective for working with families.

<sup>11</sup> The low rate of participants describing the outreach funds as effective surprised stakeholders; they felt they had heard more positive responses about the effectiveness of those funds.

**Table 7. Participant Ratings of RFHF Training Material/Resource Effectiveness**

| <b>Resource</b>                            | <b>Participant</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>Most Effective</b> | <b>Not Effective</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Giveaway books                             | FSW                | 42       | <b>93% (39)</b>       | 0% (0)               |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | <b>82% (40)</b>       | 0% (0)               |
| Children's books                           | FSW                | 42       | 69% (29)              | 0% (0)               |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 53% (26)              | 0% (0)               |
| Finger puppets                             | FSW                | 42       | 48% (20)              | 2% (1)               |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 33% (16)              | 2% (1)               |
| RFHF workshop scripts                      | FSW                | 42       | 19% (8)               | <b>24% (10)</b>      |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 61% (30)              | 12% (6)              |
| RFHF workshop handouts                     | FSW                | 42       | 48% (20)              | 12% (5)              |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 78% (38)              | 2% (1)               |
| Felt board and felt stories                | FSW                | 42       | 38% (16)              | 2% (1)               |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 45% (22)              | 10% (5)              |
| Music CD                                   | FSW                | 42       | 50% (21)              | 2% (1)               |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 31% (15)              | 6% (3)               |
| Six-skills mini-posters                    | FSW                | 42       | 48% (20)              | 14% (6)              |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 61% (30)              | 4% (2)               |
| Local library information/card application | FSW                | 42       | 31% (13)              | 14% (6)              |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 25% (12)              | 0% (0)               |
| Point of contact parent activities         | FSW                | 42       | 31% (13)              | 5% (2)               |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 37% (18)              | 4% (2)               |
| RFHF brochures                             | FSW                | 42       | 12% (5)               | 12% (5)              |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 45% (22)              | 4% (2)               |
| Professional books/resource books          | FSW                | 42       | 19% (8)               | 10% (4)              |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 47% (23)              | 4% (2)               |
| Early literacy DVDs                        | FSW                | 42       | 14% (6)               | 14% (6)              |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 35% (17)              | 10% (5)              |
| Travel vouchers                            | FSW                | 42       | 12% (5)               | 14% (6)              |
|                                            | Library            | 49       | 18% (9)               | <b>14% (7)</b>       |

## PRESENTATION OF EDUCATION SESSIONS

FSWs and children’s librarians were asked to reflect back on the 10 different education sessions they could have presented to families and describe (1) how frequently they presented the different session types, and if they presented a session type (2) how easy was it to present the session and (3) how engaged were families with the education session.

Participants varied in which education sessions they presented frequently. The most frequently reported education session for children’s librarians was “Early Brain Development” (51%) whereas the most frequently reported session for FSWs was “Reading Books (86%). This self-reported frequency differed somewhat from the actual service delivery logs submitted to the evaluation team. Those logs suggested that the most frequently presented session for both groups was “Print Motivation.” The logs suggest that Early Brain Development was the 5<sup>th</sup> most frequently presented session for librarians and reading books was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most frequently presented session for FSWs (see section on “Family Service Delivery”, below).

Participants also varied in which sessions they felt were easy to present. Most FSWs (86%) found “Reading Books” the easiest education session to present, whereas children’s librarian felt most comfortable presenting “Print Motivation” (73%). Finally, participants described how engaged families were with the different types of education sessions they presented. Most FSWs thought families were most engaged with “Reading Books” (89%). Children’s librarians felt families were most engaged with “Print Motivation” (87%). Table 8 describes the participants’ ratings of the education sessions.



**Table 8. Participant Ratings of Education Session Presentations**

| Education session       | Participant | N  | Presented most frequently | N  | Ease of presentation | N  | Family engagement |
|-------------------------|-------------|----|---------------------------|----|----------------------|----|-------------------|
| Reading books           | FSW         | 36 | <b>86% (31)</b>           | 36 | <b>86% (31)</b>      | 35 | <b>89% (31)</b>   |
|                         | Library     | 43 | 35% (15)                  | 34 | 65% (22)             | 32 | 81% (26)          |
| Print motivation        | FSW         | 36 | 81% (29)                  | 35 | 83% (29)             | 35 | 72% (25)          |
|                         | Library     | 44 | 36% (16)                  | 40 | <b>73% (29)</b>      | 39 | <b>87% (34)</b>   |
| Early brain development | FSW         | 36 | 81% (29)                  | 35 | 77% (27)             | 35 | 83% (29)          |
|                         | Library     | 43 | <b>51% (22)</b>           | 39 | 64% (25)             | 39 | 46% (18)          |
| Vocabulary              | FSW         | 36 | 70% (25)                  | 33 | 76% (25)             | 32 | 78% (25)          |
|                         | Library     | 44 | 34% (15)                  | 40 | 70% (28)             | 40 | 83% (33)          |
| Phonological awareness  | FSW         | 35 | 54% (19)                  | 31 | 52% (16)             | 33 | 64% (21)          |
|                         | Library     | 44 | 30% (13)                  | 36 | 64% (23)             | 32 | 69% (22)          |
| Print awareness         | FSW         | 36 | 69% (25)                  | 35 | 72% (25)             | 33 | 70% (23)          |
|                         | Library     | 42 | 36% (15)                  | 40 | 65% (26)             | 36 | 81% (29)          |
| Dialogic reading        | FSW         | 35 | 46% (16)                  | 33 | 55% (18)             | 31 | 48% (15)          |
|                         | Library     | 43 | 33% (14)                  | 33 | 64% (21)             | 33 | 79% (33)          |
| Narrative skills        | FSW         | 36 | 44% (16)                  | 33 | 45% (15)             | 32 | 41% (13)          |
|                         | Library     | 44 | 41% (18)                  | 39 | 69% (27)             | 39 | 77% (30)          |
| Phonological games      | FSW         | 33 | 49% (16)                  | 29 | 59% (17)             | 29 | 66% (19)          |
|                         | Library     | 42 | 26% (11)                  | 33 | 55% (18)             | 29 | 69% (20)          |
| Letter knowledge        | FSW         | 35 | 32% (11)                  | 31 | 48% (15)             | 31 | 48% (15)          |
|                         | Library     | 42 | 33% (14)                  | 35 | 64% (21)             | 33 | 79% (26)          |

“What we are hearing about is how giving parents the skills to teach the kids to read is kind of magical. It develops this bond between parent and child that they don’t see in other interactions, and we have been so thrilled with seeing vulnerable families, even with babies, realizing that that the engagement and bonding that goes on when you give the child a book is really pretty amazing and that is one thing that we didn’t realize would be transformational for these families.”

~ RFHF Stakeholder

## BOOK GIVEAWAY AND TRAVEL VOUCHERS

### *Book Giveaway*

At the initial RFHF training, each participant received 15 “giveaway” books so that each of the expected 15 families receiving the curriculum would have a book as part of their participation in the education sessions. The number of giveaway books presented to families is reported in the section “Family Service Delivery,” later in the results section. However, two questions about the giveaway books were included on the post-training survey:

- 67% of participants (61% of FSWs, 72% of children’s librarians) felt that the giveaway book “corresponded well” to the education being presented to the family, and
- 71% of participants (94% of FSWs, 51% of children’s librarians) felt that the family/child seemed “interested/excited” in the giveaway book.
  - Many FSWs reported that the RFHF giveaway book was often the first book the child they were visiting ever received. This could account for the significantly higher rating of excitement compared to library users who may be more accustomed to books.

### *Library Outreach (Travel Voucher) Funds*

At the RFHF training, participants and program supervisors were informed that \$200 for each participating Healthy Start program and library was available for the purpose of helping get library services to families and to get families to the library. During Year 1, transportation request forms described allowable travel costs as including:

- Bus tickets for Healthy Start families
- Taxi vouchers for families
- Renting a bus or other vehicle to transport families to the library, and
- Mileage reimbursement for library staff traveling to provide library services to Healthy Start families

Year 1 participants described barriers to families using the library, including families avoiding the library because they owe late fees and families not using the library because the library charges for a library card. Subsequently, in Year 2, the request for “transportation funds” was expanded to allow programs to use the funds for “library outreach” by applying the funds to (1) help pay for library cards for those families who would not normally obtain one due to cost, and (2) pay off (or help reduce) the fines incurred by families (see Family Service Delivery later in results for additional information on library outreach funds).

“I’m writing to let you know how the library spent the \$200 we received. This last summer we had an outing for Tide Pooling [to tie into the Summer Reading stories and theme]. We invited children to ride the bus at no cost to them; [we had a lot of low income youngsters and thought they could learn better if they could actual see the things they read about]. This was a three hour outing and the bus ride was \$40. We had a great time and learned so much. There were 33 people involved in this outing. \$160 was spent on [existing library] fines for low income children, 13 who then spent hours reading at a payback rate of \$1 per hour.”

~ Librarian/Fund Recipient

**Table 9. Number and Amount of Library Outreach Awards**

| Cohort year | # of counties requesting funds | # HS programs | # Libraries | Amount awarded |
|-------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1           | ≈6 <sup>12</sup>               | 11            | 6           | \$3,300        |
| 2           | 11 <sup>13</sup>               | 10            | 17          | \$5,600        |
| 3           | 12                             | 12            | 13          | \$5,000        |
| Total       | 29                             | 33            | 36          | \$13,900       |

According to reports from the RFHF Program Coordinator, library outreach funds were provided to 22 Healthy Start programs and 30 libraries in 23 different counties. Library outreach funds were awards of \$200 per program for use in removing barriers to families using the library. During Years 2 & 3, programs were required to submit a summary of how they planned to use their outreach funds. The use of funds included:

- Transportation vouchers (gas cards, bus tickets) or transportation reimbursement (program vehicle) to bring families to the library
- Offsetting out-of-district fees for obtaining a library card
- Reducing/paying off outstanding library fines
- Staff mileage reimbursement for transporting families/driving to program events
- Other incentives (such as giveaways or snacks during story time)

In Year 2, the majority of library outreach funds were used for:

- transportation vouchers (43%),
- paying off library fees (25%),
- staff reimbursement (15%),
- paying for library cards (13%), and
- other (5%).

In Year 3, the outreach funds were primarily used on:

- off-setting library fines (43%),
- transportation vouchers (35%),
- library card fees (11%) and
- staff mileage reimbursement (11%).

<sup>12</sup> The exact number of counties requesting funds in Year 1 is unknown; however, it is at least 6.

<sup>13</sup> One community program attending the training, Even Start, requested and received library outreach funds although they were not part of the original study.

## PARTNERING

Part of the rationale for training FSWs and children’s librarians together was to help establish a forum for creating partnerships among professionals focusing on early literacy work with children and families. As part of the post-training survey, participants (trained in Years 1 & 2) reported on the partnerships they developed with the other agency.

- 95% of FSWs reported partnering with the local library “at least once” when providing literacy information to families. 53% reported partnering “once a month” or more.
- 97% of children’s librarians reported partnering with a Healthy Start representative when providing literacy information to families. 74% reported partnering ‘once a month’ or more.
  - The reports of partnering between FSWs and children’s librarians increased substantially compared to last year’s data (83% of FSWs reporting partnerships; 57% of children’s librarians reporting partnerships).

Participants were asked to describe the types of activities that they successfully partnered on together. The most frequently reported partnership activity for FSWs was “organizing a library event (non-tour) with parents.” For children’s librarians, the most frequently reported partnership activity was “organizing a library tour with parents.” Table 10 describes the frequency of successful partnership activities as described by participants.

“In the “Get Ready to Read” classes presented bilingually for parents we have noticed that part of the presentation on brain development and the connection to early learning had made an impact on [the parent’s] desire to do as much as they can to make learning a good and fun experience for their children. The parents, including fathers, actually put into practice what we have presented when we have a “use the skills” time when both the children and parents gather at the end of the program.”

~ Children’s Librarian

**Table 10. Frequency of Successful Partnership Activities**

| <b>Partnership activity</b>                          | <b>% (n) FSWs reporting successful partnership</b> | <b>% (n) children’s librarians reporting successful partnership</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Coordinating a story time effort at the library      | 21% (9)                                            | 12% (6)                                                             |
| Organizing a library tour with parents               | 14% (6)                                            | <b>31% (15)</b>                                                     |
| Organizing another library event with parents        | <b>31% (13)</b>                                    | 16% (8)                                                             |
| Coordinating a story time at a non-library location  | 7% (3)                                             | 14% (7)                                                             |
| Organizing a library tour with staff                 | 5% (2)                                             | 8% (4)                                                              |
| Presenting early literacy information to other staff | 5% (2)                                             | 14% (7)                                                             |

Participants also provided feedback (via open-ended questions) about advantages to working with the partner agency as well as obstacles encountered when working together.

#### *Advantages*

Fifty-nine participants (28 FSWs, 31 children’s librarians) provided feedback on advantages to the agencies working together. Most notably:

- **Reaching New Families.** Eighteen children’s librarians (58%) noted that partnering with Healthy Start has allowed them to reach more families. One children’s librarian commented, “They know the families and their children. Partnering with Healthy Start Representatives was a good way to get to personally know the family and get them involved in the library.” Another librarian added, “They [FSWs] are great at breaking down the perceived barriers that some young parents who have not used a library before have.” No FSWs reported reaching new families as a result of their partnership with the library.
- **Shared Events and Resources.** Eighteen FSWs (64%) and six children’s librarians (19%) described the benefit of shared events and available library resources. One FSW said, “It was great to sit in on story times and use the [library] facility to let children explore words and stories.”
- **Staff Relationships and Professional Development.** Five FSWs (18%) and five children’s librarians (16%) highlighted the importance of staff relationships—both with families and among professional staff. FSWs commented on children’s librarians creating an open environment for their families: “Staff were readily available to answer questions and meet parents. Staff provided a welcoming atmosphere that encouraged families to come back.” Further, both FSW and library staff felt that working together helped strengthen

their own work, as mentioned by one librarian, “Working on partnering with others who share the same goals is always helpful.”

- Multiple Sources of Education for Families. Four FSWs (14%) noted the importance of having the information they were presenting to families, reinforced by another person. “We teach the same things on early literacy, so the families are receiving the same information from both of us.” No children’s librarians reported multiple sources of education for families as a benefit to partnering with Healthy Start staff.

### *Obstacles*

Fifty-four participants (26 FSWs, 28 children’s librarians) provided feedback on obstacles encountered when working together. Responses were organized into several distinct categories:

- Time/Coordination. Seven FSWs (27%) and 17 children’s librarians (61%) reported time/coordination as an obstacle to successful partnership. For instance, one FSW reported that the story times offered at the library were typically during “nap time” for the families. Additionally, several children’s librarians cited not knowing who to contact or not feeling that there was a clear Healthy Start contact to get in touch with, as a barrier to partnering.
- Other Agency Disengaged/Not Interested in New Approaches. Ten FSWs (38%) and seven children’s librarians (25%) felt that the other agency’s unwillingness to participate and/or implement a different approach to working with families was a barrier to working together. For instance, one FSW felt that even though the library was appreciative of Healthy Start families obtaining library cards and attending story times, “[The library] felt they were already doing the things I suggested we could do together. They didn’t feel a need to include me in on that.” Similarly, one children’s librarian stated that “[Healthy Start] did not respond to calls to plan an activity together.”
- Family Barriers. Six FSWs (23%) and one children’s librarian (4%) felt that the obstacles to the agencies successfully partnering was due to family barriers. These barriers included families not interested/not available to go to the library, library card access, and language barriers.
- Other Barriers. Four FSWs (15%) and 5 children’s librarians (18%) identified several other barriers to successful partnerships such as (1) geographical boundaries for libraries not being the same as Healthy Start programs, contributing to inability to engage in some partnerships (2) staff layoffs, and (3) library cards being unavailable for some families.

## **CONTINUED PRACTICE, NEEDED RESOURCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### *Continued Practice*

Within 12 months of the initial training, it was expected that participants would have reached the expectation of providing at least one early education session to 15 different families. At the time of this report, 74% of expected families have been reached (see section on Family Service Delivery, below). As a final part of the post-training survey, participants were asked whether they planned to continue implementing the RFHF education sessions with families once their

expectations were met. Approximately two-thirds of the participants (65%) plan to continue delivering education sessions:<sup>14</sup>

- 65% of FSWs planned to continue, 35% were not sure, and none said they would not continue.
- 65% of children’s librarians planned to continue, 15% were not sure, and 21% said they would not continue.

Finally, participants also provided feedback (via open-ended questions) about additional resources and recommendations for the RFHF curriculum.

### *Additional Resources*

56 participants (25 FSWs, 31 children’s librarians) provided input about additional resources needed in order to continue teaching the curriculum to parents.

- Giveaway Books. Eleven FSWs (44%) and 12 children’s librarians (39%) felt that having access to more giveaway books is essential for continuing to teach the curriculum to parents. One FSW commented, “Sometimes, the books we give out are the only books some of our families ever have.”
- Additional Training. Three FSWs (12%) and 3 children’s librarians (10%) requested on-going additional trainings and trainings for new staff.
- Additional Materials. Seven FSWs (28%) and 10 children’s librarians (32%) requested additional materials including brochures about the six-skills, short parent handouts and other parent “giveaways” such as posters and magnets to serve as reminders of the shared information, and Spanish language materials. Additionally, almost half of the FSWs responding (43%) commented that they could benefit from having clearer materials and activities, as well as activities that are more applicable to a younger age group of children.
- Other Resources. Four FSWs (16%) and five children’s librarians (16%) suggested other resources as important to continuing teaching the curriculum to parents such as the need for child care options (for parents attending sessions), and additional location options for holding trainings and parent groups.

### *Other Recommendations for Improving the Training Workshop*

35 participants (17 FSWs, 18 children’s librarians) provided recommendations for improving the RFHF workshops presented to staff. Responses included the need for:

- Material Revision/Condensing. Twelve FSWs (71%) and 9 children’s librarians (50%) commented on the materials. Participants from Year 1 were concerned about the amount of materials. An effort was made to restructure the Year 2 training so that it involved fewer materials, and that materials were better organized. Despite those changes, over half of the respondents suggesting changes to the materials were from the Year 2 trainings. One librarian commented that the materials needed to be simpler, as some of

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<sup>14</sup> It is possible that some staff, despite not continuing to deliver “education sessions”, may continue to implement strategies learned in the trainings such as using songs/rhymes and using finger puppets as a way to engage children and families in reading.

the parents don't have a high education level themselves. Some FSWs repeated this concern: "A lot of my parents are not readers themselves, or are illiterate." One librarian commented that they were unable to use any of the PowerPoint presentations because computer hookups were unavailable at the location of presentation. The majority of FSWs trained in Year 2 offering comments on the materials (56%) suggested that the materials were too geared toward an older age group and weren't as accessible for families of younger children.

- Challenges Presenting Material. 2 FSWs (12%) and seven children's librarians (39%) commented on the challenges they experience presenting some of the materials. Several of the concerns were expressed by staff trained in Year 1. Year 2 trainings focused on modifying the approach to teaching material presentation. However, there were still several library staff trained in Year 2 that expressed ongoing challenges such as presenting to teen parents, motivating parents of younger children, and practicing (modeling) the actual sessions.
- Need for Spanish Materials. Two children's librarians and two FSWs trained in Year 1 mentioned the need for Spanish materials. Additional Spanish materials were made available as part of the Year 2 trainings. No participants from Year 2 expressed the need for additional Spanish Materials.
- Other Recommendations. Four participants provided ideas for other recommendations that did not fit into the above categories. These recommendations included: time for more coordination with the other agency, opportunities to partner with other agencies, reduced evaluation reporting on the sessions provided to families, and a reduction in the number of email communications about the project.

## Family Service Delivery

### LIBRARY LOGS

Of the 117 children's librarians trained prior to the end of the data collection period for this report, 112 (96%) submitted family training logs for inclusion in the evaluation. Based on information provided by the logs, 2,281 Education Sessions were presented to approximately 1,886 families (about 1 Education Session per family and 17 families per librarian). It is important to note, however, that the number of families reported by library staff is not a unique count. Many families attending library activities only listed a first or last name and some librarians coded families by a number rather than a name, so identifying unique families is difficult. Additionally, the same family may be presented an education session by different librarians over time, so each librarian would be able to count that family as unique for them.

The average time of the Education Sessions presented was 30 minutes (about 65% of the sessions were 15-30 minutes). During those sessions, 1,447 "giveaway books" (approximately 77% of families) and 76 families received library outreach funds (approximately 4% of families) were provided to families. The most frequent Parent Education Sessions presented were Print Motivation (34% of the sessions presented) and Reading Books (16%). Dialogic Reading (2%) and Letter Knowledge (3%) were the least frequently presented Sessions. Table 11 describes the frequency of the Parent Education Sessions provided by children's librarians.

**Table 11. Education Session Frequency (Children’s Librarians)**

| Education session       | Frequency of sessions | Percent of sessions |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Print Motivation        | 780                   | 34%                 |
| Reading Books           | 364                   | 16%                 |
| Phonological Awareness  | 284                   | 12%                 |
| Print Awareness         | 206                   | 9%                  |
| Early Brain Development | 160                   | 7%                  |
| Narrative Skills        | 161                   | 7%                  |
| Phonological Games      | 115                   | 5%                  |
| Vocabulary              | 83                    | 4%                  |
| Dialogic Reading        | 66                    | 3%                  |
| Letter Knowledge        | 62                    | 3%                  |

## FSW LOGS

Of the 175 FSWs trained prior to the data collection cutoff date for analysis, 162 (93%) submitted “pink forms” on families. Based on information submitted by the FSWs, 5,225 Education Sessions were presented to 1,428 different families—about 4 Education Sessions per family, and 8 families per FSW submitting forms.<sup>15</sup> On average, FSWs were spending about 15 minutes presenting the Education Sessions (about 76% of session were 15 minutes). During those sessions, 1,137 families (80%) received at least one “giveaway book” (a total of 2,245 books were distributed, averaging about 2 per family<sup>16</sup>), and 58 families (4%) benefited from funds reserved for library outreach.

“It has been fun. A great process. It is really wonderful and is around the state.”

~ RFHF Stakeholder

The most frequent Parent Education Sessions presented were Print Motivation (23% of the Sessions presented) and Reading Books (19%), while Dialogic Reading, Phonological Games, and Letter Knowledge were the least frequently presented Session (4% each). See Table 12 for frequency Parent Education Sessions presented by FSWs.

<sup>15</sup> One FSW submitted data on incorrect forms. While that FSW and the families served are included in the above numbers, specific information (including types of education sessions and book giveaways) is not available for those families for this report.

<sup>16</sup> It may be worth FSWs making sure that all of the families they are presenting the curriculum to receive at least one giveaway book before presenting additional books to families who already received a book.

**Table 12. Education Session Frequency (FSWs)**

| Education session       | Frequency of sessions | Percent of sessions |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Print Motivation        | 1,174                 | 23%                 |
| Reading Books           | 999                   | 19%                 |
| Vocabulary              | 735                   | 14%                 |
| Early Brain Development | 475                   | 9%                  |
| Narrative Skills        | 460                   | 9%                  |
| Print Awareness         | 402                   | 8%                  |
| Phonological Awareness  | 356                   | 7%                  |
| Dialogic Reading        | 210                   | 4%                  |
| Phonological Games      | 199                   | 4%                  |
| Letter Knowledge        | 183                   | 4%                  |

By June 2012 it is expected that 4,500 families in Oregon would have been presented an education session from either a children’s librarians or FSWs who attended the RFHF curriculum training. **To date, 3,314 families--74% of expected—have received an education session.**

### Child and Family Outcomes

To examine differences in the frequency with which parents engaged in early literacy activities with their children, we constructed a matched comparison group using data from Healthy Start families who had not yet received the RFHF curriculum. We compared the frequency of early literacy activities of these parents to a matched group of families who had received at least one RFHF session (the “program” group). In order for families to be included in the program group, we verified (via Family Service Delivery (“Pink”) Forms) that the family received at least one education session from their FSW. The evaluation team also created a comparison group of families who (1) received services prior to the program county being trained in the RFHF curriculum and (2) did not receive any RFHF service delivery (education sessions). The most recent parent survey completed by the family was considered for analyses. The program and comparison groups were matched so that families from both groups appeared similar (no significant differences) on various descriptive traits. See comparisons in Table 13 below.

**Table 13. Demographic Comparisons of Families in Program and Comparison Group**

| Descriptive traits             | Program group | Comparison group |
|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Parent Speaks English          | 81%           | 79%              |
| Mother is Caucasian            | 55%           | 54%              |
| Mother is Hispanic             | 35%           | 36%              |
| Mother is Other Race/Ethnicity | 10%           | 10%              |
| Average Family Risk Factors    | 3.4           | 3.5              |
| Range of Family Risk Factors   | 0 – 8         | 0 – 9            |

About two-thirds of the families (62%) whose workers presented parent education sessions to them had a 6-month or later parent survey submitted after the worker went to the training. This is not unusual, as it may be that education sessions were provided but no Parent Survey was due to be submitted on these children by the time data were finalized for this report. Parent Surveys with these literacy items are only completed when children are 6, 12, 24, 36, and 48 months of age. For instance, if an education session was presented when a child was 13 months of age and data collection (for this report) ended when the child was 18 months of age, we would not anticipate a survey on this family for another 6 months. Also, parents have the option to decline the parent survey. For instance, about 2% of all Healthy Start parents declined to complete the 6-month parent survey. The return rate may be partially explained by some parent refusals. It will be important for Healthy Start leadership to stress the importance (to both program staff and program supervisors) of completing these survey forms so that future evaluations will have additional data available.

In order to determine the impact of the RFHF Education Sessions on families, Parent Survey responses were compared across the two groups. Of the 13 literacy-related items asked on the Parent Survey, eight of the 13 items showed a significant difference when comparing responses from families whose FSW had attended the RFHF curriculum to those families whose workers had not been presented the curriculum. The literacy-related items are described in Table 14. It is worth noting that families whose FSW received the RFHF training were significantly more likely to be engaging in all of the library-related activities included in the Parent Survey. These findings are promising, as they demonstrate the increased role of the parent in impacting their child's learning and preparation for school. Additionally, these findings have shown an increase over the results reported in the Year 2 evaluation summary (in that summary, only 4 of the 13 items showed a significant difference in the expected direction). Research has shown that on tests of language development, children who were actively involved in the reading process had more advanced language and pre-reading skills.<sup>17</sup>



<sup>17</sup> Whitehurst, G. J., et al. (1994). "A Picture Book Reading Intervention in Day Care and Home for Children from Low-Income Families." *Developmental Psychology*, 30(5), 679-689.

**Table 14. Literacy Outcome Differences for Parents Visited RFHF Trained FSWs Compared to Parents Visited by FSWs Untrained.**

| <b>Outcome indicator</b>                                                                        | <b>RFHF mean</b> | <b>Comparison mean</b> | <b>Statistically Significant</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Response scale ranged from (1) not at all to (6) more than once a day</b>                    |                  |                        |                                  |
| Sang songs                                                                                      | 5.2              | 5.1                    | No                               |
| Told stories or talked about activities you are doing with your child                           | 5.5              | 4.7                    | <b>Yes</b>                       |
| Read/looked at books                                                                            | 5.1              | 4.8                    | <b>Yes</b>                       |
| Play games (like peek-a-boo, finger-games, etc.)                                                | 5.5              | 5.5                    | No                               |
| <b>Response scale= yes/no</b>                                                                   |                  |                        |                                  |
| Have a library card for you or your child                                                       | 56%              | 49%                    | <b>Yes</b>                       |
| <b>Responses ranged from (0) never to (3) more than once; Percent reported = At least once</b>  |                  |                        |                                  |
| Attended a story time at the library in the last month                                          | 22%              | 16%                    | <b>Yes</b>                       |
| <b>Response scale ranged from (0) never to (3) weekly; Percent reported = At least once</b>     |                  |                        |                                  |
| Check materials out from the library for your child                                             | 40%              | 32%                    | <b>Yes</b>                       |
| <b>Response scale ranged from (0) never to (3) often; Percent reported = At least sometimes</b> |                  |                        |                                  |
| Ask child what will happen next in a story (when reading together)                              | 63%              | 61%                    | No                               |
| Point out and talk about pictures in a book (when reading together)                             | 96%              | 96%                    | No                               |
| Help child learn new words from a book (when reading together)                                  | 89%              | 86%                    | No                               |
| Relate the story you are reading to something in child's experience                             | 73%              | 67%                    | <b>Yes</b>                       |
| Child pretends to read along (when reading together)                                            | 81%              | 73%                    | <b>Yes</b>                       |
| Child participates in reading by asking questions, turning pages, or acting out parts of a book | 86%              | 80%                    | <b>Yes</b>                       |

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

### WHAT PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS ARE SAYING ABOUT RHFH

The RHFH Project Stakeholders were interviewed as part of the Year 3 evaluation. These six individuals represented agencies of both partners (OCCF and the State Library) and included staff who were primarily involved in planning, development, and implementation; curriculum and training development; and project and program coordination. Each stakeholder was interviewed over the telephone and asked the same set of questions. The following lists each interview question, followed by a summary of responses.

#### **Thinking back to the design and implementation of the project (including materials, presentations and the process of training participants), what do you think were the most effective materials?**

Stakeholders generally agreed that the most effective materials were both the training scripts/handouts and the story-telling prompts (which included flannel boards and finger puppets), including the giveaway books. Several of the stakeholders commented that some materials were better suited for one agency over another depending on the way the agency involved parents. For instance, since librarians present to large groups, having the binders that contained scripts, Power Points and large group presentation tips and tricks was helpful. Healthy Start staff, on the other hand, primarily work one-on-one with high-need families, so perhaps benefited more from the revised material that distilled the trainings in shorter (15-minute) sessions and involve the use of “story telling aids” such as finger puppets and flannel boards to help the parents engage the child. Stakeholders agreed that the giveaway books were effective for engaging families in the curriculum.

#### **What would you have changed about the materials?**

Most of the stakeholders commented that the materials needed to be condensed. Despite the materials presented to participants being scaled back and reorganized over the 3 years of training, some stakeholders felt it remained confusing and over-organized. However, a challenge of creating materials for this project is the varied needs of the participants. As one stakeholder commented, “Having online access only and no paper wouldn’t work for FSWs because they are in people’s homes who may not have internet access.” Additionally, stakeholders offered suggestions of other changes that could be made including materials developed for low-literacy parents and concrete ideas for how to make reading more fun to families.

#### **Thinking about the trainings themselves, what were most effective?**

Many of the stakeholders felt that one of the most effective aspects of the training was providing the opportunity for participants to get hands on practice presenting the information and using the materials. Also, stakeholders felt that the trainings themselves were effective for partnership building. One stakeholder said, “Cross education about each other was a highlight. FSWs had a lot of information about libraries, but didn’t know all of their resources. Some librarians didn’t have a clue about Healthy Start. Learning about different programs...and how to reach out to them was huge.”

**What aspects of the curriculum/training do you think had the most impact on participants?**

Stakeholders offered their impressions about which aspects of the curriculum training had the most impact on participants. Some felt parts of the information shared had the most impact, specifically the brain development session. Others felt the training itself had the most impact—such as preparing participants to use the curriculum with families after the training. Relationships among organizations were also reported as having an impact on participants. The training helped “facilitate a relationship between Healthy Start and librarians, not just encourage it.” Another stakeholder added, “The goal of the project was to have the librarians create a more welcoming environment for non-traditional users—those without high literacy and with young babies. Working with high-risk families had a huge impact on them. It was eye-opening.”

**What would you change about the trainings?**

Stakeholders were varied in their responses related to changing the training. Responses included the following suggestions:

- Find time in the training schedule to allow more time for participants to practice
- Provide more examples on how to share information with and engage parents
- Include supervisors and managers from the very beginning
- Focus on information for younger children (up to 18 months)
- Simplify the training for the trainers
- Minimize the material if it doesn’t minimize the “evidence” in the evidence-based curriculum
- Plan ahead of time for follow-up trainings in order to locate experts in the field

**Regarding the process of implementing the trainings—coordinating and planning, identifying participants—what worked well?**

Stakeholders commented on a variety of aspects that worked well. The facilitation that occurred in order to bring both Healthy Start and librarians to the table was essential for the project to succeed. Strong leadership—from having a good project director, to statewide organizational support, to volunteer coordinators at training sites—all contributed to well-planned trainings. One stakeholder commented that the trainings were about practicing and having fun, “A lot of early literacy work is how you engage families and kids.”

**What would you have done differently?**

Stakeholders talked about the immense coordination challenge involved in this type of project. These challenges included (1) identifying staff (Oregon libraries are not centralized so it was difficult to find out who the youth librarians were in each community and how to contact them), (2) scheduling trainings (to meet the climate/geography of the traveling trainers) and having training facilities that had equipment and software available for the training, and (3) budget constraints related to reconvening trained staff (on conference calls) for training follow up and check-ins.

**Thinking about both the partnerships between Healthy Start and the library, and their implementation of the parent trainings, what do you think was most successful?**

Many of the stakeholders felt that the support from supervisors and the encouragement and accountability from the program helped staff successfully implement the program with parents.

One stakeholder mentioned that it was helpful that all staff had an understanding of why they were doing what they were there to do: “They came with a strong background and were able to build on what they already knew and were already doing.”

Stakeholders felt that project success was tied to the partnerships created between the two agencies and how they worked together: “That was a significant systemic change in the ways they are doing business and it is very exciting to see because it will lead to ongoing work with parents in their community.” Additionally, stakeholders talked about what the groups learned from one another. “FSWs have expertise in working [with] the high risk families, which is something the libraries have found challenging in the past, so [the librarians] have been able to learn a lot from [FSWs]. Likewise, FSWS have been able to learn about the many resources the library offers, including using the library to meet for parent groups, how to handle library fines, how to get library cards, and resources for illiterate parents or parents with functional literacy.”

### **What were the challenges to the staff doing this successfully?**

Stakeholders offered a variety of ideas that challenged staff in their implementation of the program. For instance, participating staff already had a lot to do as part of their existing work. Library staff, who were often the only staff person available at the library at a given time, were challenged to find time to implement the program with parents. Healthy Start staff needed to add an additional curriculum to implement on top of existing curricula and heavy caseloads, and during the course of the project, were faced with staff layoffs, which contributed to heavier than normal caseloads. Another stakeholder suggested the need for more “big picture planning” and having “how-to ideas for participants” because the preparation time for staff creating activities to do with families was more than expected.

Several stakeholders commented that the structure of the two programs within a county is an additional challenge. For instance, Healthy Start has county-wide services and in many counties, a worker covers multiple areas of the county. Libraries, on the other hand, are typically focused in specific areas of a county, so a FSW would have to work with multiple librarians within their county, depending on where their families were located. “Because of the way Healthy Start operates, a FSW could have 10 different families that live near 10 different libraries, so has to work with all 10 libraries and librarians.”

Budgets, staffing, resources and time are common continuing challenges for the project. Several stakeholders commented on the concern of continued implementation by Healthy Start. Specifically, FSWs traditionally have a higher turnover rate than children’s librarians. When staff leave, some take their materials with them, others leave the materials behind. It is unclear to Healthy Start programs what to do with the remaining materials and how to pass it on (train) to new staff. Stakeholders also commented on the continued need for Healthy Start program support, both at the state level and at the program/supervisory level.

### **How are staff from Healthy Start and the library planning to maintain their partnership?**

The maintenance of partnerships between the two groups varies a bit from partnership to partnerships. Some partners have planned to attend each other’s meetings, and host literacy events together, have play groups meet at the library. Further, the RFHF project was “intentional about providing time and training on partnerships, marketing and advocacy for participants. Supervisors were brought in to the training so they could review what their staff had come up with as far as their ideas regarding sustaining the relationships, and create a Memorandum of Understanding with each other to carry out the plans.”

**As funding comes to an end, what is in place for sustainability of the project?<sup>18</sup>**

While some stakeholders were unsure what was in place for project sustainability, others suggested the following resources:

- Consultation from the Youth Services Consultant at the Oregon State Library,
- Maintenance of the Reading for Healthy Families Web site to ensure up-to-date resources for participants, and
- An email list-serve providing networking opportunities to trained participants

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<sup>18</sup> After data collection for this project was completed, it was learned that the State Library had extra Library Services and Technology Act funds. The State Library agreed to use these extra funds to purchase Every Child Ready To Read @ your Library® 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition kits for every library that participated in RFHF. These second edition kits, while not changing the content of the curriculum, focuses on teaching the activities parents should do to help their child develop early literacy skills. These activities include talking, singing, reading, playing, and writing (<http://www.everychildreadytoread.org/description-toolkit-materials>).

## CONCLUSIONS

The combined results of the prior three years of data collection for this project show a number of additional areas in which RFHF has successes over the prior years' reports. The project has successfully reached its targeted number of staff trained (97% of expected) and is well on the path to reaching the number of families suggested in the grant application. However, the number of education sessions presented to those families that have been reached, well exceeds the minimum expectation by about 20%. Trained staff have also shown an increase in engaging families in early literacy activities, and those families in turn, have shown greater literacy outcomes compared to families who have not received education sessions.

### Staff Trained

At the time of this report all RFHF curriculum trainings (a total of 13) have occurred. As planned, at least one staff from all 36 Oregon Counties has been trained. During the past several years, Healthy Start programs have faced major program budget cuts affecting the number of staff employed. These cuts were evident in Year 2, as the number of staff trained dipped below that of expected. However, despite these cuts, the number of combined library and Healthy Start staff who have received the training (292) is just slightly below the expectations of the project (300), resulting in 97% of expected staff trained—due in part to diligent recruiting efforts on the part of the project coordinator and program stakeholders.

### Families Served

To date, 3,314 families have received the curriculum—about 74% of the expected 4,500 (based on 15 families per 300 trained staff). It should be kept in mind, however, that some trained staff have been trained for fewer than 12 months (staff are given a year to fulfill their expected number of parent trainings). It is expected that this number will continue to increase over the next several months as trained participants reach additional families.

The number of families is only slightly lower than expected given the actual number of staff trained and the actual amount of time since the training (for those participants trained in Year 3). Closer examination of the data shows that librarians, in general, slightly exceed the number of expected families (about 17 families per librarian<sup>19</sup>). However, because librarians are not required to keep names of parents participating in their curriculum, it is unknown how many of the families being counted as “unique” may in fact be duplicate families. Also, librarians are able to count the same family more than once, if the family works with two different librarians on two different occasions. The data from Healthy Start presents a different picture: FSWs presented the curriculum to just over half the expected number of families (approximately 8 families per FSW). One reason for this may be FSW staff departures. As noted above, Healthy Start budget cuts have resulted in the reduction of staff. Many of these staff attended the training and were in the process of attaining their 15 families at the time of their lay off. Therefore, it is not expected that these staff would fulfill their training expectations. Further, due to the high-risk nature of the clients they work with, FSWs are given the option to not present the curriculum to families dealing with difficult life situations that would make benefiting from the curriculum a challenge—

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<sup>19</sup> It is unknown from the data how many of the families receiving education sessions at the library would be considered “high-risk families” compared to those families that may have already been engaged in and attending library services.

this may also account for the lower than expected rate of families receiving the curriculum from FSWs. FSWs may benefit from additional assistance identifying appropriate families on their caseload, as well encouraging supportive child development activities concurrently with activities designed to reduce family risk. However, despite the fact that FSWs presented education sessions to fewer families, they averaged more education sessions to each family—approximately four sessions per family. This suggests that Healthy Start staff are perhaps “offsetting” the number of families they are able to reach with the curriculum by providing the curriculum more intensively to those families they can reach.

Of the 3,314 families receiving the curriculum, approximately 2,584 families (78%) received at least one giveaway book. It is worth noting, however, that staff reported distributing approximately 3,692 books—suggesting that some families are receiving multiple books. At the training, staff were given 15 giveaway books each (one for each of the 15 families they work with), a total of 4,380 books. It may be worth exploring why some families receiving the curriculum have yet to receive one book if other families are receiving more than one book (Healthy Start staff, for instance, are averaging about 2 giveaway books per family). Staff frequently comments that for some of the families they work with, that the RFHF book is the first book that the child (or in some cases the family) owns. It may be possible that staff make decisions to provide the giveaway books to the families in the greatest need for literacy material in the home.

## **Staff Early Literacy Activities & Comprehension of Age Appropriate Behaviors**

On the first day of training, only 27% of participants reported having received an early literacy curriculum training within the past two years. However, it was clear from staff surveys administered prior to the first training session, that many library and Healthy Start staff were already engaged in several early literacy activities with children and families. The survey administered 10 months after the first training session showed that staff engaged in even more of those activities. For instance, 80% of FSWs who were not already encouraging families to check out books from the library became “very frequently” engaged in doing so with families by the time of the 10 month post-training survey. Similarly, 73% of librarians who indicated on the pre-training survey that their library could improve book lists and early literacy brochures, and early literacy trainings for parents, childcare providers and parents reported their library was engaged in these activities “very frequently” by the time of the post-training survey. These positive staff changes are encouraging for a couple of different reasons. First, the change (which was a behavioral practice for some and an organizational practice for others) occurred in a relatively short amount of time (10 months). Second, both librarians and FSWs are typically part of larger organizations that potentially have their own bureaucratic systems in which rapid change, such as that seen here, may not typically be expected.

Librarians and FSWs also identified the most appropriate age to begin 8 different early literacy activities. There were several items that at least 90% of staff identified correctly on the pre- and post-training survey. However, staff generally seemed to underestimate the ages most appropriate to begin various early literacy activities with children. Because children are different, a staff person’s experience with children who may be more advanced in skill—and thus can begin these activities earlier—may explain some of these results. Further, it may be that staff are (appropriately) offering activities that are slightly ahead of children’s developmental trajectory in order to support and encourage their development, a technique known as “scaffolding.” This is appropriate as long as staff are careful not to build unrealistic developmental expectations in parents.

A more in-depth review of the RFHF curriculum and how it presents developmental milestones to participants related to these activities should be conducted.

## **Children and Family Outcomes**

Families receiving at least one RFHF education session from their FSW were significantly more likely to (1) tell stories and talk about activities with their child, (2) read and look at books with their child, (3) have a library card for themselves or their child, (4) attend a story time at the library, (5) check out materials from the library for their child, (6) relate the story they are reading to something in the child's experience, (7) have children that pretend to read along when being read to, and (8) has a child that participates in reading by asking questions, turning pages, or acting out parts of a book.

While several other items did not show significant differences between the families who received an education session from their FSWs and those who had not, it is notable that all of the items having to do with library use were significantly better for RFHF families.

Further, when considering the parent-level outcomes, it is important to remember that parents received (on average) only four 15-minute Parent Education sessions (about an hour of early literacy training per family). The average "intervention" time of 60 minutes over a 12-month period is an unusually light "dosage" for a literacy program and should not be expected to have comprehensive or large impacts on parent's behavior—especially in the short term. Further, improving early literacy among Healthy Start families has been a focus for some time.

## **Library Outreach (Transportation) Funds**

One area that has shown dramatic change has been in the use of transportation funds. RFHF leadership modified the use of the funds in Year 2 to include paying for library cards and/or using the funds to pay for existing library fines—two issues staff frequently reported as barriers to families using the library. Data suggest that 22 Healthy Start programs and 30 libraries in 23 different counties submitted a plan for using outreach funds in Years 2 and 3.

## **Collaboration/Agency Partnership**

Encouraging partnerships among Healthy Start programs and the libraries is a key component of the RFHF project. Despite the fact that many staff commented that partnering is a time consuming process, staff are reporting in having successfully engaged at least once in those partnerships—96%—is significantly higher than last year (70%). The advantages of partnering were clear to staff: the partnerships allowed them to reach new families, introduce families to events and resources at the library, provide multiple opportunities and ways to educate families about early literacy, as well as to promote professional relationships among the other agency's staff.

## **Stakeholder Feedback**

Stakeholders offered insights and opinions into the curriculum training, partnerships, and sustainability.

The trainings not only served as an opportunity for participants to gain new early literacy information and practice delivering the education sessions based on the information and materials they received, but also as a way to facilitate partnerships among the agencies and learn from one another. It was suggested that future trainings for this type of curriculum could include additional practice time for participants, more focus on younger children and additional support identifying

potential participants within the community (librarians were especially difficult to identify as the state library system is not centralized).

It was recognized that participants deal with their own set of challenges. For instance, when a participating librarian is the only person available at the library at a given time, it is unreasonable to expect that her/his librarian duties can be “put on hold” in order to conduct an hour long parent group. Similarly, FSWs fit a large amount of family assistance, training and curricula into their home visits with a family and the addition of a new curriculum created some timing challenges. Despite these challenges, stakeholders were very excited about the partnerships that had been made, and noted how supervisors supported staff in doing this work.

Multiple resources to encourage sustainability are in place as the funding for this project draws to a close. Specifically, ongoing consultation will be available from the Youth Services Consultant at the Oregon State library staff, a Reading for Healthy Families Web site housing project resources, an email list-serve providing ongoing communication among trained participants, and 35 community members certified as Every Child Ready to Read trainers, available for training of new staff and agencies.

## Summary

The overall outcomes for RFHF are impressive and have shown an increase from prior years’ reports. The number of trained staff and served families is congruent with the project expectations. Staff report more literacy activities with families, and those families are more likely to be engaged in several key early literacy activities. Inter-agency partnerships among the two agencies provide opportunities for parents to engage in library services they otherwise would not have sought out, introduce new families to the library, and provide professional support among librarians and FSWs in bringing early literacy to Oregon families.

A few areas may need further attention. For instance, both FSWs and librarians seem to underestimate the ages most appropriate to begin various early literacy activities with children. Training materials should be reviewed to make sure these developmental milestones are given sufficient discussion during the trainings. Participants (and their supervisors) should also make sure that families receiving education sessions each receive a giveaway book before providing additional books to families who already received one. Further, participants continue to report that successful partnering among agencies is time consuming. Agency supervisors and RFHF leadership should work at identifying additional supports to encourage and enhance these partnerships, including additional clarity around the most appropriate staff to communicate with for establishing the partnerships. Finally, future work with the curriculum should focus on having additional materials available as parent handouts as well as more clearly defined activities to do with parents in a more individualized (one-on-one) setting.