

ROOM TO GROW:
Building on Boston's Tradition of
Caring for
Our Children



A project of the
Office of Children and Families
Juanda Johnson-Taylor, Manager

A division of the Office of Community Partnerships
Juanita Wade, Director and
Chief of Human Services

City of Boston

Thomas M. Menino, Mayor

Jennifer Freeman
Liz O'Connor

February 2002

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Office of the Mayor
Thomas M. Menino

Boston's families are working harder than ever to meet their basic needs.

The economic downturn, an expensive housing market, longer work hours, and a shortage of affordable childcare and out-of-school programs, are taking a toll on the city's parents and children.

The *Room to Grow* initiative recognizes that families need help coping with the increasing demands on their time and resources. I am grateful to our community partners for helping us to look at the delivery of children and family services in Boston. Thanks to their hard work and commitment, we have developed new ways to deal with the changing needs of Boston families.

If we continue to work together, we will make Boston a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas M. Menino".

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston



March 2002

CITY OF BOSTON
MASSACHUSETTS

**OFFICE OF COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS**

THOMAS M. MENINO
Mayor

Juanita B. Wade
Director and Chief, Human Services

Adalberto Teixeira
Deputy Director, Human Services

Jerry Mogul
Deputy Director
Planning and Research

Office for Children and Families
Juanda Johnson-Taylor, Manager
Tel.: 617-635-2130

Boston Community Learning Centers
Kevin P. Stanton, Director
Tel.: 617-635-3187

Safe Neighborhoods Youth Fund
Cuong P. Hoang
Youth Funds Manager
Tel.: 617-635-2258

SafeFutures Initiatives
Darrell LeMar, Director
150 American Legion Highway
Dorchester, MA 02124
Tel.: 617-635-2230

Dear Colleagues,

Last year, the staff of the Office for Children and Families (OCF), a division of the Office of Community Partnerships, began to take a look at the issues and concerns that most impact the well being of Boston's children. Our goal was to gather information that would inform the work of OCF as well as other city departments and organizations that work daily with Boston's children and their families.

At the on set, we envisioned results which would speak to the need for increased services and additional resources to insure the well being of Boston children, and while this was a refrain that we heard loud and clear, we also heard another message. Specifically, we heard over and over, that families today are under a tremendous amount of stress, and this stress is directly affecting children. Thus we decided to take a closer look and the Room to Grow process was created.

While one may respond that in these times of economic uncertainty, and in the face of very real cuts to the budgets of programs and services for Boston families, a focus upon the impact of family stress diminishes the need for additional financial resources. However, it is precisely at this time that we need to develop a better understanding of the impact of family stress upon the healthy development of children. The stress is real, the potential impact upon our young people is real, and to fail to acknowledge these facts and to put in place systems and processes to address them is to fail to adequately plan to foster the development of healthy children.

We are encouraged by our conversations during the Room to Grow process, many providers, parents and advocates see putting in place processes that reduce the impact upon stress on children as critical to fostering well being. But there is more that we can do. I invite you to read this report with an eye to how we can work together to develop and implement strategies to negate the impact of stress and maximize our ability to foster the healthy development of all of Boston's children.

Sincerely,

Juanita B. Wade
Chief Human Services
Director, Office of Community Partnerships

Acknowledgements

The Office of Children and Families wishes to thank all the many concerned and talented members of the community and City of Boston staff who contributed to the ideas in this report.

Special thanks go to the members of the Advisory Committee, those who were interviewed during the Room to Grow process and all who attended the three Room to Grow forums.

In addition, we would like to thank Boston College for hosting the Room to Grow Citizen Seminar in June 2000, and for the facilitation assistance of Boston College faculty and City staff at that event.

Finally, we would like to thank the guest speakers who made the Room to Grow Citizen Seminar so lively and provocative: Marilyn Anderson-Chase, Latifah Hasan, Dr. Gloria Hammond and Dr. Mark Hinderlie.

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I. Executive Summary

It seems that most adults today feel stressed. Read any newspaper or magazine and find an article related to reducing stress, or identifying its causes and effects. Health professionals and other researchers are intensively pursuing questions related to the impact of stress on our productivity at work, and on our overall health and well-being.

Typically, we look at stress as an individual health or well-being problem, with an individualized solution. Recently, however, many observers have moved from this individualized notion of stress to an understanding of the impact of stress on the entire family.

One important conclusion of this work is that family stress –caused by an array of things from hectic schedules to living in poverty - affects all of us, and therefore, affects all of our children.

This view is shared by a wide mix of Boston parents, service providers and others who participated in Room to Grow, a community planning process designed to improve conditions for Boston's children birth through 13. Room to Grow is based upon an understanding that Boston has a wealth of family support services, but that new problems and issues pose new challenges. In responding to new conditions, we will build strategies around the currently successful initiatives and programs.

Room to Grow: Initial Focus

The project involved over 400 Boston residents, service providers, cultural institutions, government agencies, clergy, educators and parents in an effort to determine where new policies, projects and programs could benefit Boston's children and improve their well-being over time. The project aimed to find the areas where focusing our attention would yield the biggest payoff for the city's children.

The project began with a few simple steps - to catalogue the current state of children's services in Boston, to identify gaps in services and make recommendations on how best to fill those gaps.

It also began with the understanding that the Boston community of non-profit and service providers are already providing a strong foundation for child well-being, a base from which we could grow together.

Boston's Tradition of Caring for Children: Strong Family Services

The Room to Grow community scan revealed clear indicators of our success as a community in working toward child well-being. Some of these indicators include:

- Most Boston women receive adequate prenatal care.
- Boston has high rates of childhood immunizations.
- State and federal investments have expanded the supply of affordable early care and education.
- Test scores are rising in most Boston Public Schools.
- The availability of out-of-school care programming has increased significantly in recent years.
- Communities offer health services in many languages.
- Boston has abundant arts and recreation opportunities for families.

Families Still Struggle

In addition, Room to Grow participants stressed that more services are still needed. Despite our community's successes, Room to Grow participants remain concerned that some families' basic needs are still unmet. They expect these conditions to worsen with changing economic conditions:

- The state's unemployment rate is rising faster than the national average.
- Family homelessness is on the rise.
- Quality early childcare is still frequently not available or affordable for working families.
- Violent crime rates are rising.

And Children Need More than Expanded Services

When we asked service providers and parents what all this meant for Boston's children, we got two answers.

First, it is clear that we need to do more to meet the basic needs of families in the areas of housing, health care and support for education.

Second, it is equally clear that more services alone will not solve the problems facing Boston families.

There is a growing sense that families are stretched to the limit in more than economic terms. While providers acknowledge the need for more services, they also emphasize that some conditions are beyond their reach. Families are experiencing rising levels of stress, and in the worst cases, this causes chaos in homes.

Room to Grow: A Focus on Family Stress

Through a series of interviews, local and national research and community meetings, OCF discovered a growing consensus among service providers and parents that family stress is a problem seemingly beyond the range of most currently available family services. They also agree that additional work must be done to fully understand the current causes and impacts of family stress on Boston's children.

This idea – that family stress is a growing and immediate threat to child well-being, but not yet fully understood – shifted the focus of Room to Grow. The process took a turn to examine stress directly, asking preliminary questions about where stress is created, what agencies can do about it and what it all means for children.

What Do We Know About Family Stress?

Local and national data provide initial insight into causes and effects of family stress. First, family stress cuts across all economic, racial, and neighborhood groups, but *is significantly more severe in poorer families*. Many children suffer the effects of stress disproportionately because of the economic status of their family:

- 35% of Boston families earn below the level necessary for economic self-sufficiency (\$42,546 for a family of four). 46% of Boston households earn incomes less than \$35,000 annually.¹

Family stress is a growing and immediate threat to child well-being, but not yet fully understood



Second, changing expectations at work are putting greater pressures on working parents:

- In the past 20 years, the average employed person has increased time spent on the job by 163 hours per year, the equivalent of an extra month a year.²
- 25% of American workers felt that they could not take all of their earned vacation time because of pressures at work.³

Third, we know that children are also affected by these pressures on their parents.

- Research shows that children wish that their parents were less stressed and tired when they return from work, and that to most children, this is even more important than spending more time together.⁴

Room to Grow participants believe that the consequences of not helping children with the impact of these stresses may be seen in rising levels of behavioral concerns, developmental delays, and mental health disorders. These problems may also grow with children, creating barriers to their ability to live productive adult lives and raise their own healthy children.

Room to Grow participants believe that family stress and its impact on children deserves immediate attention.

What Next? Recommendations from Room to Grow

1. All members of our community must begin to focus on how we can help to alleviate family stress and its impact on children.

Room to Grow participants offered ideas on ways the entire community can work together to alleviate stress in families, detailed in this report.

2. Institutions that interact with families must prioritize the reduction of family stress in planning new programs, and should take account of the impact of stress on children in assessing outcomes.

This report offers two new proposed program development and evaluation tools, developed by Room to Grow participants. The Planning Principles are designed for service providers to help focus programming on reducing stress for families. The Boston Family Stress Index is designed to assist in measuring our progress in reducing the negative impact of family stress on children.

The Planning Principles:

- We will consider the impact of our work on Boston's young children.
- We will consciously ask and answer the question of whether or not our plans are in the best interests of Boston's children.
- We will work with the understanding that Boston is a community of many languages, cultures and family structures.
- We recognize the interdependence of our work with other organizations and we will develop projects that share strengths among us.
- We will examine the impact of our work on the ability of others to support and maintain strong families.
- We will involve families in our planning.

The Boston Family Stress Index

- Parents don't feel overly stressed on a regular basis.
- Parents read with children each day.

- Parents and children feel that they have adequate time to play and relax together.
- Children are well-rested, well-fed, dressed appropriately and on-time for school.
- Children are up-to-date on their immunizations and get regular physical and dental check-ups.
- Parents obtain needed physical and mental health care.
- Parents are confident that children are safe and receive quality care when in the care of others.
- Staff of education and childcare programs know important personal things about the children in their care: things that can comfort, favorite food, living situation, etc.
- Children with developmental delays receive support at the first and earliest signs, and this support is sustained over time.
- Parents are confident that schools meet children's needs.
- Parents feel that schools meet family needs in terms of scheduling and providing opportunities for parent involvement.
- Children display appropriate emotions in school and among friends.
- Children are curious and enjoy their activities.
- Children do not have multiple transitions in care giving structure in one year.
- Families have multiple sources of community support, such as neighbors, friends, relatives and social services.
- Parents believe that their values are shared by others in their community.
- Free, multicultural, neighborhood-based cultural activities are available and well-attended by families.

3. Policy makers, funders, government leaders, and community programs must link funding and policy-making directly to the issue of family stress and its impact on children.

The Office for Children and Families will take the lead in working with other agencies, government and private funders to integrate the recommendations of the Room to Grow participants in their work.

They will convene additional Room to Grow conversations in three major contexts:

a) **Funders:** Working with major regional grantmakers, OCF will share the community recommendations related to building a new focus on the reduction of family stress into human services and other family programming.

b) **Government:** OCF will work with local, state and federal officials to share the finding and conclusions of Room to Grow and seek ways to integrate these recommendations into policy and program development.

c) **Community Programs:** OCF will offer technical assistance and future Room to Grow forums around this issue. In addition, OCF will use the recommendations to guide future resource allocations and funding opportunities.

Room to Grow provides an opportunity to take this issue seriously enough to allow it to affect and change practices, to influence the programs, systems and institutions that affect family life for the well-being of children.

II. Introduction

Room to Grow is the name of a year-long community strategic planning process designed to improve the well-being of Boston's children, birth through 13. The process marshaled the energy and ideas of a wide mix of service providers, parents, and policy makers who share experience and interest in serving families.

Room to Grow is a project of the City of Boston's Office of Children and Families (OCF), a division of the Mayor's Office of Community Partnerships (OCP). OCF undertook Room to Grow as a next step to the "City-Wide Strategy for Youth Development" conducted by the OCP during 2000.

The project involved more than 400 individuals from all segments of the community to ask the question:

What do Boston's children need to thrive?

Through surveys, focus groups, community meetings, and interviews, participants of the Room to Grow process responded to this question with thoughtful and thought provoking responses.

This report summarizes the conclusions of the Room to Grow conversations, and lays the groundwork for community action on behalf of Boston's children and families.

The report is intended to provide service providers, public policy makers, funders and others with a new perspective on the issues facing families and children today. It also proposes a starting point from which we can, as a community, begin to shift our approach to our work with families in light of the contemporary realities they face.

How can we truly make Boston a city that nurtures and supports its children and its families, and contribute to an environment in which children can thrive?

III. A Community Conversation about Child Well-Being

The need for social services has always exceeded the demand. The recent economic downturn and events of September 11, 2001, has increased our collective sense of insecurity and vulnerability. This uncertainty will take its greatest toll on the most vulnerable among us.

The economic recession and the state budget crisis, along with new anxieties following September 11, will create new stresses on Boston's children and families.

For human service providers, policy makers and others, this period of uncertainty and unpredictable resources requires us to think differently about how we will meet the needs of the families we serve.

The Office of Children and Families' efforts to reach out to its partners and reexamine our approach to serving children and families began long before September 11. But in light of the state's fiscal crisis and the growing number of needy families in Boston and nationwide, it is clear this initiative is needed more than ever.

The Room to Grow strategic planning process explored our collective concerns for children's well-being and our community's response to children's needs.

Boston has a unique mix of providers who support children and families. The work of its many agencies, civic groups, churches and volunteer organizations, combined with a long history of close knit, family-oriented neighborhoods, provide the backdrop for our examination of child well-being.

These same "stakeholders" offered the ideas and insights within this report. Their central conclusion: That many of the greatest threats to children's well-being stem from a high level of stress and distress in the family. Some families who are doing well still have little time for children and family activities. Most parents work hard, and feel pressured by the many obligations they juggle. Other families are struggling with serious economic problems, family violence, chaos and instability. This stress affects families of all income levels, but has its greatest and most negative effects in families struggling with economic hardship.

Moreover, Room to Grow participants described the ways that a stressful family environment manifests itself in children: some may develop higher levels of anxiety, insecurity and depression; others may exhibit developmental delays; others may become more aggressive, or develop other emotional or behavioral problems. In general, children from homes that are highly stressed are deprived of the fullest opportunity to learn and grow.

...many of the greatest threats to children's well-being stem from a high level of stress and distress in the family.

The Room to Grow Conclusion



...children from homes that are highly stressed are deprived of the fullest opportunity to learn and grow.

Boston's rich mix of funders and service providers working with families provide a strong foundation for addressing these issues, and give cause to believe that we have "room to grow" – that we can have a positive impact on the quality of life for Boston's children and families.

Service providers and parents agree that it is crucial that we understand and respond to the issue of "family stress" and its impact on children.

The Room to Grow process is the first step in developing a shared understanding and a community response to the conditions creating stress on Boston's families.

A. The Room to Grow Process

From January to November of 2001, the Office of Children and Families engaged more than 400 city residents, including parents, childcare providers, educators, health professionals, clergy and others working on behalf of children, in a community conversation about child well-being. The project had three major phases:

The Community Scan:

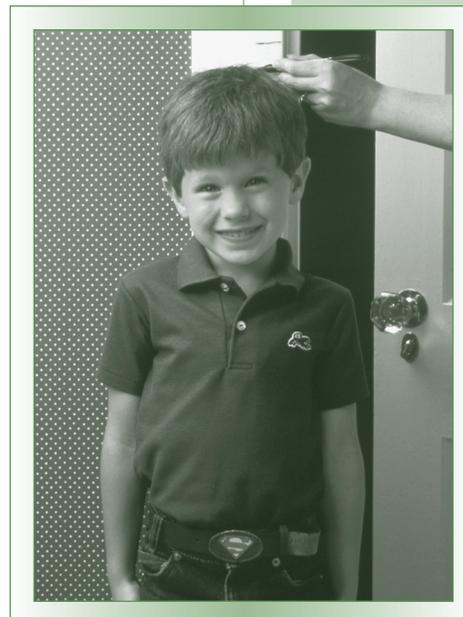
During the first step of Room to Grow, OCF catalogued the goals and objectives of the many local agencies and organizations currently working with children. In this scan, OCF reviewed the strategic plans, annual reports, progress reports, mission statements and other documents of hundreds of local organizations. The results of the community scan can be examined in Appendix A (Community Scan Data Chart.)

Community Input:

Next OCF gathered input from all sectors of the community concerned with the well-being of children. From February through May 2001, OCF interviewed more than 50 individuals, surveyed parents and clergy, and conducted focus groups with childcare, health and community service workers. Finally, OCF and Boston College collaborated on a citizens' seminar in June of 2001, which involved nearly 200 interested stakeholders from a wide variety of professions and civic groups.

Community Feedback Forums:

Finally, OCF shared what it learned during the first two stages with the community, at three community forums in October and November 2001. Participants added to the insights gleaned throughout the process and considered their implications for program planning and future work on behalf of Boston's children.



The Room to Grow Process Map

Community Input

Interviewed more than 50 key stakeholders on vision, goals, impediments to child well-being. Reviewed strategic plans of agencies serving children and families. Surveyed faith-based organizations and parents of children in early care and education.

March– May 2001

Community Scan

Compiled data relevant to children's well-being.

Identified 3 goal areas common to stakeholders.

January – May 2001

Community Feedback

Presented initial findings and gathered further input at BC Citizen Seminar attended by nearly 200 people.

June 2001

Community Feedback

Held three community forums with approximately 60 stakeholders to present findings and develop ideas for an action agenda.

October – November 2001

Final Report:

Produced and disseminated final report, including:

- Examination of child well-being as it relates to family stress.
- Overview of current agency goals and current indicators in use by agencies in Boston, including a look at the current status of Boston's children.
- Collection of community ideas for reorienting programs to alleviate family stress and strengthen child well-being.
- The Room to Grow Recommendations

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B. What Do Boston's Children Ages Birth to 13 Need to Thrive?

Participants of the Room to Grow process said:

- To be loved
- To be safe
- To have caring, consistent adult caretakers
- To have a home

What is standing in their way?

When asked to reflect on the most significant threats to child well-being, over 50 percent of respondents interviewed during Room to Grow focused on family stress, poverty and related issues:

- Family stress
- Lack of time
- Too few resources to meet family needs

Participants repeatedly described the stress that families are under, working long hours that strain parents' ability to give time and attention to their children. Contributing to the stress created by lack of time is the stress associated with having too few resources to meet family needs.

What do children need to improve their well-being?

When asked what children need to improve their well-being in light of the stressful environments in which they live, service providers focused on core service and emotional needs.

- Family stability and parents with access to support
- High-quality childcare and out-of-school time programming
- Connections to a caring adult

Translating these general needs into more specific service needs, Room to Grow participants emphasized that families need more services and funding in the areas of housing, early care and education, and general support services.

Providers identified these key resource problems:

- Housing is too costly and housing stock too limited;
- Early care slots are too few, too expensive, and quality too uneven;
- Out of school time care is not available to all who need it;
- Resources and programs that support the whole family and increase parents' abilities to create stable and enriching homes for their children are few.

Providers also identified a need to collaborate in the following ways:

- By coordinating services to be family-friendly;
- By increasing points of access to services for families in need of them;
- By developing comprehensive programs that support the family as a unit;
- By focusing resources on prevention in addition to intervention.

Family Stress: A Common Theme

Addressing the Impact of Family Stress

IV. Family Stress: A Threat to Child Well-Being

During the community input phase of the Room to Grow process, OCF asked stakeholders to reflect on the greatest threats to child well-being. Providers indicated that they worry about the effect of reduced basic services and resources on families.

In fact, the new state budget will result in significant cuts to human services. Providers will be required to do more with less. Families face the same mathematical problem. The implications of our current fiscal situation stretch beyond slashed services and reduced slots.

So we asked, how do these shortages, economic problems and stresses affect children?

This question provoked a spirited response. Many participants noted that even when services are plentiful, or economic constraints are few, families seem to be stressed and stretched to the breaking point.

Add the elements of an expensive housing market, limited childcare availability, and lack of family support services, and participants expressed concern that many Boston families are operating under levels of stress that undermine their ability to nurture the healthy development of their children.

They answered:

More than 50 percent of Room to Grow participants identified poverty as a major contributor to family stress.

“Families are barely making it economically, with parents working two jobs to cover rising housing costs” – Room to Grow participant

“Even if we could offer more services for families, it is the chaos in their lives that we can't resolve. Parents need help with management of all of these issues – ranging from housing to school assignments to arranging dentist appointments for their kids.” - Room to Grow participant

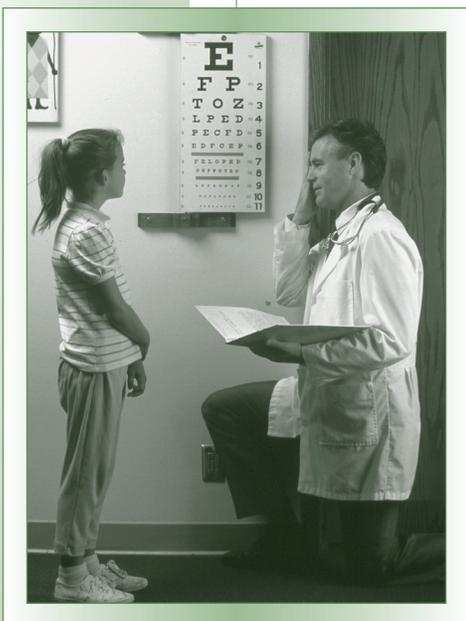
These local concerns echo the insights of national research:

“Stressful events and life circumstances can have adverse physical and psychological effects on children and adolescents. Moreover, poverty, health problems, and other economic and personal concerns can pose significant challenges to parents. When parents are preoccupied with stressful circumstances, they may be less able to provide an optimal home environment for their children and, when overwhelmed, may even become harsh or coercive toward their children. At worst, stress in families can contribute to violent or abusive environments.” - Child Trends

How do changing economic conditions affect children?

Participants responded

A shift in focus



Thus, the focus of Room to Grow shifted. Participants explored the nature of family stress and developed recommendations about new ways to approach our work with this issue in mind.

A. Is Family Stress a New Phenomenon?

No, but the nature of family stress is changing and the experience more widely shared.

Family stress is one result of worsening economic conditions.

Room to Grow participants, as well as current research at the national level, shows that family stress affects poor families most profoundly, and has increased in recent years, in part due to increased economic strains on families. These strains are clear in Boston:

- The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Boston is \$1,465, a 59% increase from 1995.⁵
- 35% of Boston families earn below the level necessary for economic self-sufficiency (\$42,546 for a family of four). 46% of Boston households earn less than \$35,000 annually.⁶
- Half of children living in families with income below the poverty level live in stressful family environments, according to national researchers.⁷

Family stress also results from changing cultural and work-place demands:

Participants and researchers also agree that family stress affects families across all income levels, and is related to lack of time and social and work pressures:

- In the past 20 years, the average employed person has increased time spent on the job by 163 hours annually, the equivalent of an extra month each year.⁸
- According to noted pediatrician and child development specialist Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, "People are under a heck of a lot of stress and, of course, it transfers to kids." Brazelton's concerns are that children are over-scheduled; that they are placed in structured after-school programs that don't allow them to "really play," and that they are bombarded with violent media content.⁹
- 45 percent of parents respond "always" or "most of the time" to this statement: "I feel I have to rush to get everything done each day."¹⁰



The Central Question of Room to Grow

- When parents argue, mothers are three times more likely and fathers six times more likely to have conflict with children.¹¹
- “I’m hearing from pediatricians about kids with deep bags under their eyes and stress-related health problems, from the pressures of too many activities and too much pressure to succeed in school and at extra-curricular activities.”¹²

B. How Can We Focus Upon Family Stress When Dollars Are so Desperately Needed for Services?

It is clear that first and foremost more family services are needed, especially in the context of the state’s current budget challenges. Yet it is also true that at times the “system” provides all it can in terms of services, and still children don’t seem to be thriving. Families may find that the patchwork of remedies available cannot solve the problems they face.

In an era of declining resources, asking the human service community to take on a “new” issue like family stress seems impossible. However, during uncertain times, it’s important to examine our work and how it nurtures families. Where could positive changes emerge?

Room to Grow encouraged providers to follow their intuitions; to work together and identify new ways to use existing resources. We also asked stakeholders to consider the issue beneath the need for housing, drug treatment, mental health services, early education and after-school slots. The underlying question is:

How do we address the needs of children and help them to live within the current realities families face. How can we help them thrive in spite of these difficulties?



This is the central question of Room to Grow.

V. A Closer Look at Family Stress

Room to Grow looked at what we as a community need to do to ensure child well-being in Boston. Early on, OCF noted that service providers measure child well-being in terms of the services available to children and families. The Room to Grow process highlights the fact that it is difficult to measure the relationship of services to child well-being.

As family stress emerged as a major issue, Room to Grow participants began to assess child well-being in the context of the family environment. They began to assess services in that context as well.

What happens to children when the unemployment rate increases? When housing is too expensive? When asthma rates are skyrocketing? What is the direct impact on children over time? How can we address children's needs that are the result poverty and lack of housing, education, health care and employment?

The chart below summarizes Room to Grow participants' answers to those questions.

The Stress	The Impact
<p>There isn't enough childcare for all the children of working parents</p> <p>There is a waiting list of 3,300 for subsidized care in Boston. Infant and toddler slots are especially difficult to find.¹³</p>	<p>Children may lack appropriate supervision and care</p> <p>Children may be frightened by staying alone or with a patchwork of caregivers. Children may feel neglected or abandoned.</p> <p>Children may have "fragmented time" – no sense of routine, creating fear and anxiety.</p>
<p>When families find care, it may not be truly affordable.</p> <p>59% of families report that in order to pay for care they have to borrow money, use up their savings, go into debt, drop their health insurance or simply not save any money.¹⁴</p>	<p>Other family needs may be unmet.</p> <p>When childcare costs eat up such a high percentage of family earnings, other needs (health care, food, savings, clothing, etc.) may go unmet.</p>

The Stress

Even when kids are in care, it may be of poor quality

Staff turnover was 23% for center-based and 56% for after-school care respectively in 1999.¹⁵

22% of parents of children in childcare surveyed by the Department of Education could not say that they always felt their child was safe and secure with their caregiver.¹⁶

After school programs are not available for many kids who need them.

Parents United for Childcare estimates that approximately 17,572 Boston children not enrolled would use after-school care if it were available.¹⁷

Two thirds of kids under 14 in Boston live in families where parents are unable to care for them between 2:00 and 6:00 pm.¹⁸

Parents stress levels at work are high.

Families are struggling to make ends meet.

Approximately 35% of Boston families do not have incomes adequate to cover living costs.²²

The Impact

Children are missing opportunities to learn and grow.

Children who don't know their caregivers, or who don't feel safe with their caregivers, may feel insecure and develop less trusting attachments with adults.

Even when children feel safe, poor quality childcare may prevent them from reaching their developmental potential.

Children may not have opportunities to make the necessary bonds with their caregivers, or may face losing caregivers with whom they have close bonds.

Children may lose ground,

Studies show that children, particularly those from low socioeconomic levels who attend high quality programs, have better peer relations, emotional adjustment, grades and conduct in school compared to peers who are not in programs.¹⁹

and may exhibit aggressive behavior.

Research shows a clear link between aggressive behavior and the time children spend watching TV. Kids who watch less TV are less prone to aggressive and violent behavior.²⁰

Children feel parents' stress from work when they are at home.

Research shows that children wish that their parents were less stressed and tired when they return from work, and that to most children, this is more important than spending more time together.²¹

Children may feel guilty expressing their needs.

Children feel guilty about incurring costs, "grow up too soon," worry about families stability.

The Stress

Many families are homeless.

The number of homeless families in Boston has increased 32% since 1997 and 100% since 1990.²³

Families are living in overcrowded housing.

Overcrowded housing units have increased in almost every neighborhood in Boston in the last ten years, with 15% of housing units overcrowded in Mattapan and 12% in Roxbury.²⁴

Parents have more to manage than they can cope with.

Local research recently found that there are minimal parent support services available for parents of children under six years old.²⁷

Parents of 18% of low and moderate-income children in Massachusetts felt "highly aggravated" (stressed and frustrated) as parents, compared with 14% nationwide.²⁸

Levels of aggravation have increased significantly among high-income parents over the past two years.²⁹

Asthma rates are rising because of increasing environmental hazards.

Asthma rates are higher in Boston than in the rest of the state.³²

The Impact

Children's learning and growing is compromised.

The chaos of living in a shelter or moving from place to place significantly increases the emotional/behavior problems of children, and has a negative effect on their ability to succeed in school.²⁵

Children may lack the space and quiet they need for doing their homework, sleeping and quiet time.

Overcrowding is closely linked to increased stress and distress in families.²⁶

Children are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

Rates of abuse and neglect rise when parents feel unsupported, alone, isolated and overburdened.³⁰

Children of highly aggravated parents are disproportionately more likely to have cognitive and socio-emotional difficulties.³¹

Children may miss school, have more emergency hospitalizations and miss out on physical activities.

Recent local research link asthma to chronic absenteeism for young children. Chronic absenteeism is closely linked to poor performance in school.

VI. Room to Grow Ideas for Addressing Family Stress

After this examination of the impact of family stresses on children, we asked participants to turn their attention to solutions.

A. What Can Be Done About Family Stress?

Many participants of the Room to Grow process suggested that the traditional structure of social services is not flexible enough to address the shifting needs of families. Participants felt that changes in the delivery of services could affect how children experience and cope with the stress around them.

In an era of declining resources for social services, Room to Grow participants felt it was critical for service providers to build strong collaborations. In the view of participants, collaborations can help address the needs of the whole family, support its strengths in addition to addressing problems, and provide support that can prevent the emergence of far more serious problems.

Room to Grow participants brainstormed specific actions that every sector of the community could use to build partnerships and expand our ability to provide holistic services to families. Their ideas are included in the **Call to Action** below.

"We need to find new ways to build social networks and supports"

Alleviating Family Stress and Mitigating its Impact on Children: Ideas from Room to Grow Participants

Cultural organizations might consider...

Offering parent education in the context of fun family activities, rather than separate workshops or classes that are difficult for parents to attend.

Integrating entertainment with family support; inviting the entire family to activities, finding ways to connect with parents within that context.

Offering free cultural activities in after school and out of school hours, in neighborhoods densely populated with kids.

Service providers might consider...

Offering parents opportunities to call or drop-in for timely information on parenting, discipline, effective boundaries, and behavior modification – a ongoing of “tantrum hotline” for parents who need just-in-time information.

Meeting regularly to plan/ develop systems to offer holistic services for families.

Bringing services to where the children are – e.g. offering preventive health care at childcare centers.

Enriching their central program through collaboration with other providers, to bring in on-site health, mental health, parent support, childcare and other family services.

Seeking multiple sources of funding for more flexible programming and control in programming.

Ideas From Forum Participants

The Horizons Initiative offers homeless mothers a much needed break by recruiting volunteers to play with children in informal settings while their moms take time to search for housing, jobs, or just take a little time for themselves. This short term respite from the responsibilities of parenting is a welcome refresher to stressed moms.

"Collaborative partnerships and coalitions should focus on families, not just the child."

“Neighborhood Dinner” solves the single mom stress in one Boston neighborhood. Three moms who each care for two children on their own decided to pool their resources and eat together one night each week.

The Family Nurturing Center brings parent support to the places where families are found: child-care centers, health centers and other local services which cater to parents and children. This saves the already harried family one more stop.

Neighbors might consider...

Arranging neighborhood family dinner nights that bring everyone together, mixing parent-to-parent support, playdates for children, and information-sharing with the daily meal.

Sharing emergency childcare , such as on snow days or odd school holidays

Creating phone lists or “call-a-neighbor” arrangements for emergency assistance, last minute babysitting help, etc.

Schools might consider...

Holding meetings after work hours, with dinner for family.

Using e-mail to communicate with those parents who have access, and helping low-income parents to obtain computers.

Providing the means and encouragement for parent-to-parent support networks to develop.

Recruiting volunteer parent monitors for school buses or other places where parents worry about safety for young children

Placing parent advocates in libraries during evening hours

Extending the hours of the Parent Information Centers.

Sponsoring family literacy programs and activities.

Funders might consider...

Funding preventive, family strengthening services to complement intervention services funded by government.

Providing funding for collaboration, co-locating services, transportation.

Funding efforts to explore more deeply the causes and potential approaches to stress among Boston’s families.

Offering more funding for the core operating support of organizations that serve families rather than on a per-served basis.

Parents might consider...

Looking at and re-evaluating how family time is spent.

Reaching out and creating informal connections with other parents to give and get information and support.

Remembering spiritual connections.

Reducing the number of "activities" that kids do, spending that time as "family down time."

Turning off the TV, video games and computer games.

Making reading together a top priority.

Employers might consider...

Giving time off to parents who need to visit schools during school selection process.

Developing policies to create flexibility about the start and end times for the workday.

Providing back up, snow day and holiday childcare.

Educating management and the wider workforce that parent support improves productivity in addition to being "family friendly", in order to take the stigma off working parents.

Offering "generic" personal days that can be used for illness, vacation, or family time, depending on the needs of the employee.

Recognizing that meeting employees' human needs improves their performance as employees.

Offering "free" time out of work to visit children's schools, attend parent-teacher conferences and school events.

"We should integrate resources, work with the whole family, and identify family assets"

One large national hotel chain discovered that their corporate culture of "face time" was driving good employees to leave – they wanted to spend more time with their families. The hotel chain found it increasingly hard to recruit the talent they needed, and had to face the staffing crisis head on.

Their solution? To transform a "see and be seen" culture with a program called "Management Flexibility." This change initiative focused on finding ways for managers to be both successful in the company and strong parents and family members.³³

"Let's focus dialogue on 'what do we need to do differently to have healthy children'"

Fleet Bank, UMASS Boston and the City of Boston offered their employees four hours of time off to do school-related tasks for their young children, such as visiting schools during the selection process.

Government might consider...

Setting up systems to automatically trigger related benefits with the same eligibility process, e.g. childcare vouchers, food stamps, and MassHealth.

Stationing DTA workers to take applications for all these benefits at convenient night and weekend times, in neighborhood locations that are frequented by families, such as social service agencies, health centers, and retail areas.

Convening a task force on finding ways to mitigate stress for various special populations: immigrants, single parents, two-parent working families.

Directing more funding to prevention programs, in addition to intervention services.

Collaborating more extensively among agencies to facilitate holistic support of families, i.e. large-scale case management.

Creating realistic, supportive policies regarding work and welfare that analyze more completely the impact of these policies on child well-being.

Providing funding to increase wages of childcare teachers and others with responsibility for care of children to reduce early education teacher turnover.

Building public and media awareness of the impact of family stress on young children.

Faith-based organizations might consider...

Finding ways to connect parents to each other, and creating opportunities for informal gatherings of families.

Providing outreach and support for agencies who are serving families in need.

Working in partnership with service providers and funders by offering advice, and programming support.

Recruiting volunteers for service organizations.

Developing expertise in identifying stress as a factor for struggling families and addressing this directly.

B. Community Developed Tools for Change

As the community discussed how to change our approach to family needs, it began to explore how we might incorporate these new ideas into our every day work.

Participants recommended and developed two types of tools which offer a framework to account more fully for family stress.

- the Planning Principles
- the Boston Family Stress Index

The planning principles reflect participants' commitment to working together across agencies and with families as partners in developing new programs.

The Boston Family Stress Index gives a starting place for examining our progress in reducing the negative effects on children that result from increasing family stress in difficult times.



1. The Planning Principles

The ideas below were generated by Room to Grow participants discussing ways to work more effectively together. Room to Grow participants committed to working to incorporate these planning principles into their regular program development work.

Participants expressed the belief that using these principles in the development and management of human services would have a positive impact on families, particularly in the area of reducing family stress.

- We will consider the impact of our work on Boston's young children, and will strive to ensure that our work does not have unintended harmful consequences.
- We will continuously ask and answer the question of whether or not our plans are in the best interests of Boston's children, and will proceed only when we can decisively answer 'yes.'
- We will work with the understanding that Boston is a community of many languages, cultures and family structures.
- We recognize the interdependence of our work with other organizations and we will develop projects that share strengths among us.
- We will examine the impact of our work on the ability of others to support and maintain strong families.
- We will strive to always involve families and a family perspective in our planning.

2. The Boston Family Stress Index

To judge our progress in alleviating family stress, and to add to our ability to understand the state of child well-being in this new context, we will need a new set of indicators. These indicators can use currently existing data to measure the impact of family stress on children, but in some cases new sources of data may need to be developed.

The Child Trends “Family Stress Index”

One well-known example of such indicators was developed by Child Trends, a national organization focused on research in the area of child well-being.

The Child Trends “family stress index” uses the following measures to assess the level of stress in families:³⁴

- The family was unable to pay the mortgage, rent, or utility bills some time in the past 12 months.
- There are more than two people per bedroom in the household.
- It was often or sometimes the case that food did not last to the end of the month and money was not available to get more.
- A parent is not confident that family members could get health care if they need it.
- A parent or parent’s partner is in poor health or has a physical, learning, or mental health condition.
- A child is in poor health or has a physical, learning, or mental health condition.

Children in families scoring two points or higher on the index were categorized as living in stressful family environments.

This index clearly links stress to economic instability, and our work with Room to Grow participants confirms that low-income families generally face more stress in daily life than middle and upper income families.

While it is clear that family stress results from and is worsened by poverty, Room to Grow participants also believe that it affects families at all income levels.

Additional Indicators of Family Stress

Room to Grow participants suggested that other types of stress may impact parents and children across socio-economic levels, including:

- Inability to find quality childcare / after school programming, even when affordability is not the main barrier.
- Struggling to navigate the school-choice and selection process.
- Managing the schedules of multiple children, potentially with different school day hours and sites.
- Not having enough time to be involved in children's lives because of the demands of work.
- Fears about job security or housing security related to immigration status, in addition to income level.
- Feeling isolated in the community, lacking strong community connection.
- Inability to find appropriate medical or mental health services, again, even when affordability is not a concern.
- Struggling with community / media values that are not consistent with the family's own values, including violent entertainment, media and unhealthy media images of youth.



Creating a Boston Family Stress Index

To create a baseline for understanding these issues, and to begin to identify the impact of these stressors on children, the Room to Grow process asked participants how to make an index that gauges the well-being of Boston's children in the context of the issue of family stress.

Participants believe that new measures are needed to address our common goals for child well-being. They offered these ideas for a starting place for the development of new indicators, and Room to Grow participants committed to working to incorporate these indicators into their routine program evaluation and community assessments.

The index draws upon indicators from Child Trends, Room to Grow discussions, and those currently in use by Boston service providers who work with parents and children. It offers indicators to help us measure whether we've had a positive effect on reducing the impact of stress on children. Some of the indicators can be measured with currently available data, while others require that new sources of data be developed to directly measure family stress.

The Office of Children and Families will develop further resources to assist agencies seeking to measure the impact of family stress on children and to identify mechanisms to reduce negative impacts on children. Agencies and programs seeking to integrate these as measures can seek technical assistance through the Office for Children and Families in doing so.

The Index: Measuring Child Well-Being in the Context of Family Stress

The following indicators are signs that families are reducing stress and limiting the effects of family stress on children. These help us measure our success in alleviating the impact of family stress on Boston's children.

Note: The index uses "Parents" to refer to the child's primary caregiver, whether a biological parent or other responsible adult.

- Parents don't feel overly stressed on a regular basis.
- Parents read with children each day.
- Parents and children feel that they have adequate time to play and relax together.
- Children are well-rested, well-fed, dressed appropriately and on-time for school.



- Children are up-to-date on their immunizations and get regular physical and dental check-ups.
- Parents obtain needed physical and mental health care.
- Parents are confident that children are safe and receive quality care when in the care of others.
- Staff at childcare programs know important personal things about the children in their care: things that can comfort, favorite food, living situation, etc.
- Children with developmental delays receive support at the first and earliest signs, and this support is sustained over time.
- Parents are confident that schools meet children's needs.
- Parents feel that schools meet family needs in terms of scheduling and providing opportunities for parent involvement.
- Children display appropriate emotions in school and among friends.
- Children are curious and enjoy their activities.
- Children do not have multiple transitions in their care giving arrangements in a single year.
- Families have multiple sources of community support, such as neighbors, friends, relatives and social services.
- Parents believe that their values are shared by others in their community.
- Free, multicultural, neighborhood-based cultural activities are available and well-attended by families.

Using the Index to Measure Outcomes for Children

Room to Grow participants indicated an interest in beginning to actively measure the impact of family stress on children, and design programming to reduce negative outcomes for children that result from high levels of family stress.

The chart below offers sources of data, where available, which will help programs better understand how to begin to measure our community's progress in alleviating stress in relation to each indicator in the Family Stress Index. In some instances, these measures are already in use by Boston human service agencies. The measures that are already commonly used to assess child well-being are included in Appendix A, along with baseline data showing the current status of Boston children in relation to each indicator.

Indicator	Suggested sources for baseline data
Parent stress level.	<p>Child Trends and The Urban Institute, <i>National Survey of America's Families</i></p> <p>Parents and Children's Services reports on calls to Parental Stress Line.</p> <p>Mass. Department of Social Services, reported cases of child neglect abuse.</p>
Parents read to children.	UMASS Center for Survey Research, Boston Area Survey, 2000.
Parents and children have time together to relax and play.	UMASS Center for Survey Research, Boston Area Survey, 2000.
Children are well-rested, well-fed, dressed appropriately and on-time for school.	<p>Boston Public Health Commission, The Health of Boston.</p> <p>Boston Public Schools, absenteeism and tardiness reports.</p> <p>Mass. Department of Social Services, reported cases of child neglect for Boston area.</p>
Children receive timely preventive health care.	<p>Boston Public Health Commission, data on immunization rates.</p> <p>Boston Medical Center, data on emergency room visits for preventable illness and injury.</p>
Parents get needed health care.	The Boston Public Health Commission, published reports on mental health care and conditions.

Indicator

Suggested sources for baseline data

Parents feel confidence in the safety and quality of care for their children.

The EQUIP survey data on teacher training, staff turnover and NAEYC accreditation rates.

The Mass. Department of Education "Securing our Future..." report.

Staff at childcare centers know children and understand their individual needs.

Data not available.

Children receive developmental support services as needed.

MassCHIP, database information on early intervention caseload for Boston.

Parent confidence in schools.

Boston Police Department Citizen Survey, data on top citizen concerns including schools.

Boston Public Schools, report on number of school-aged children enrolled in Boston public schools.

Parents feel schools meet their family's needs (scheduling, opportunities for involvement).

The Boston Public Schools, The Family and Community Engagement Task Force Report to the Boston School Committee.

Children display appropriate emotions.

The Boston Public Schools, reports from instructors and counselors.

The Boston School Police, reports of serious misconduct in elementary schools.

The Boston Public Schools, rate of early care and education referrals to Boston Public Schools Special Education/Chapter 766 Services.

Children are curious and enjoy their activities.

No data available.

Children have stable care arrangements.

No data available.

Families have multiple sources of community support.

UMass Center for Survey Research, Boston Area Survey, 2000.

Parents believe that their values are shared by others in their community.

No data available.

Family-friendly cultural resources are offered throughout the City.

Boston Office of Cultural Affairs, annual arts calendars and reports.

VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Room to Grow participants made three major recommendations:

1. All members of our community must begin to focus on how we can help to alleviate family stress and its impact on children.
2. Institutions that interact with families must prioritize the reduction of family stress in planning new programs, and should assess the impact of stress on children as part of program evaluation.
3. Policy makers, funders, government leaders, and community programs must link policy-making and funding directly to the reduction of family stress and its impact on children.

Why focus on alleviating family stress?

The Room to Grow process revealed a common concern among many organizations working with families, and among families themselves – that families today are pulled in too many directions, and that parents are managing many pressures, struggling to balance work, family and community commitments.

These pressures are aggravated for low-income parents by the additional burden of struggling with too few resources to meet their families' basic needs.

Service providers, while strongly stating that more services are urgently needed, also express deep frustration that services alone would not completely address their concerns about the impact of stress on children. They worry that stressed family environments—brought about by poverty, lack of time together, over work and social isolation, among other factors—are taking a heavy toll on Boston's children.

The focus on family stress that emerged during the Room to Grow process underscores the belief of the Room to Grow participants that families are the primary places where children are nurtured to grow and develop.

In addition, Room to Grow participants believe that families are operating under fundamentally different, and potentially greater, pressures than in the past, and that these changes in the family must be acknowledged so as to inform our work.

What does this insight and focus mean for our work?

The community conversation begun by Room to Grow asks us all to think about how we can better support families and help them overcome stress so they can better nurture their children. Many of the problems that cause family stress are extraordinarily difficult to solve. Yet, if we look at how our work can alleviate stress on children, we can begin to change our approach to our work, and make real differences in the lives of today's families.

Room to Grow participants expressed their belief that families are the primary places where children are nurtured to grow and develop.

The Strategic Planning Process called Room to Grow is the beginning

The Planning Principles and Family Stress Index: Resources for service providers, human resource directors, funders and others to integrate the insights of Room to Grow into their work.

The Office of Children and Families responds to community concerns

How can community institutions that deal with families adapt to the new realities families face?

We must consistently approach our work with awareness of the pressures facing today's families. As a starting point, Room to Grow asks that service providers, cultural institutions, employers, community organizations, government agencies and others use the tools and resources in this report, and work to refine them for future use.

- Use the Planning Principles to refine planning processes.
- Identify ways that collaboration can assist organizations in serving families more holistically.
- Review decision making structures to determine if increasing representation by parents would help meet the goals of focusing more attention on family stress and its impact on children.
- Use the Boston Family Stress Index in community planning, assessment, and evaluation processes.
- Look to national and local indicators to create measures of success toward the goals of the Index.
- Develop ways to analyze progress and problems in the areas of family stress, using existing data.
- Look at ways of collecting additional data that can provide greater understanding of the nature of family stress, and progress toward alleviating it. In projects around the country, funders have taken the lead in determining what additional data is necessary and developing mechanisms for the collection of that data.

Next steps for Room to Grow

To help institute community-wide change in our approach to families, the Office for Children and Families will provide resources to community organizations to help them respond to the findings in this report. In the coming year, the Office of Children and Families (OCF) will:

- Develop materials, workshops and other forms of technical assistance for organizations working to integrate the planning principles and family stress indicators, once finalized, into their work;
- Direct new grant funds for the purpose of supporting community providers as they design programs and services.

OCF will ensure that Room to Grow sparks ongoing dialogue, through convening conversations with other government and funding agencies/ organizations and sharing the implications of this work. OCF will work in three areas:

- a) **Funders:** Working with major regional grantmakers, OCF will share the community recommendations related to building a new focus on the impact of family stress into human services and other family programming.

b) **Government:** OCF will work with local, state and federal officials to share the finding and conclusions of Room to Grow and seek ways to integrate these recommendations into policy and program development.

c) **Community Programs:** OCF will offer technical assistance, and future Room to Grow community conversations around this issue. OCF will use the recommendations to guide future resource allocations and requests for proposals.

The primary audience and participants of Room to Grow thus far have been service providers. However, the changes discussed in this report must ultimately be implemented by the entire community. Room to Grow can inspire and motivate all of us – service providers, community groups, government agencies, foundations, cultural institutions, employers and families themselves – to enhance our children's well-being by alleviating the impact of family stress.



Appendix A

The Community Scan Data Chart

This chart shows the detailed results of the Room to Grow community scan. It reflects the current goals, objectives and measures in use by Boston's human service community working toward the well-being of children. It also provides the current status of Boston's children and families in relation to each objective.

Goal #1: All children have nurturing, consistent caregivers and teachers.

Objectives	Measures	Current Status
Affordable, available childcare	Length of waiting lists	3,300 families are waiting for subsidized slots in Boston. ³⁵
	# of subsidized slots	For children under 11, there is one (after school or early care) slot for every five children, (statewide). ³⁶
High academic achievement	Reading scores	52% of Boston's 3rd graders are pre-readers or basic readers. ³⁷
Parent engagement in education.	Parents read with children	43% of Boston parents read to their children no more than a few times weekly. ³⁸
	Parents assist with homework	62% of Boston parents help their children with their homework "most of the time." ³⁹
High quality early care and education, and out-of-school time.	Level of teacher training	55% of teachers in school age programs had a bachelor's degree or higher in 1999. ⁴⁰
	Competitive salaries	Childcare teachers earn \$23,546 on average annually. ⁴¹
	Program accreditation	Less than 17% of programs are accredited. ⁴²
	Low staff turnover	Staff turnover hovers between 23 and 56% annually. ⁴³

Goal #2: Boston parents have the economic, community and personal resources to meet their children's basic needs.

Boston families can make ends meet.	Percentage of families who earn more than the self sufficiency standard.	35% of Boston families do not earn more than the self-sufficiency standard. ⁴⁴
Housing for all.	# of homeless families with children.	1325 children were homeless and residing in shelters with their families in the City of Boston in December of 2001. ⁴⁵
Strong parent, child and family support	Rates of abuse and neglect.	560 reports of child abuse and neglect were filed in Boston and substantiated by DSS in the first quarter of 2001. ⁴⁶
	Use and availability of parent support services.	Family support and parenting education services reach relatively small numbers of families. ⁴⁷
	Existence of informal networks of support.	86% of parents in Boston said they had a relative or close friend with whom they felt comfortable talking about their child's health and behavior. ⁴⁸
	Stress levels reported by parents.	17.9% of parents of low and moderate income children in Massachusetts report feeling "highly aggravated" as parents. ⁴⁹

Goal #3: All children achieve their optimal physical and mental health and well-being.

Objectives	Measures	Current Status
A healthy start for all babies.	Infant mortality rates Low birth weight rates Immunization rates	Boston's rates of low birth weights and infant mortality are higher than the state average, and particularly high among minorities. ⁵⁰ 77% of children are fully immunized by age 2 in Boston. ⁵¹
Mental health services for all those who need them.	Waiting time for mental health services.	The waiting time for pediatric mental health care can be up to 30 days for individual therapy. ⁵²

Appendix B In Person Interviews and Focus Groups

- Baird, Doug, Executive Director, Associated Day Care Services, Inc., February 2000.
- Berry, Gail, Regional Administrator, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, February 2000.
- The Black Ministerial Alliance, survey, May 2000.
- Boston Medical Center, focus group of pediatricians, social workers, nurses, program operators, February 2000.
- Chandler, Sharon Scott, Director, Childcare Choices of Boston, February 2000.
- Citywide Parents Council, focus group, May 2000.
- Copper Beech Childcare Center parents, survey, May 2000
- Cowden, Marty, former Director, 0-8 Coalition, February 2000.
- DeWinter, Elise, Director, Massachusetts Family Nurturing Center, February 2000.
- Fanelli, Daria, Director of Planning, Boston Community Centers, March 2000.
- Feldman, Eliot, Director of Alternative Education, Boston Public Schools, March 2000
- Ferrer, Barbara, Director, Boston Public Health Commission, February 2000.
- Garcia, Freida, Executive Director, United South End Settlements, April 2000
- Graef, Gretchen, Attendance Initiative Director, Boston Public Schools, March 2000.
- Groves, Betsy, Child Witness to Violence, February 2000.
- Guild, Ginny, Assistant Director, Boston Community Centers, March 2000.
- Hasan, Latifah, VP Child and Family Development, Dimock Community Health Center, February 2000
- Lockwood, Holly, Executive Director, East Boston Ecumenical Council, January 2000.
- Maddox, Elaine, Director of Childcare, Boston Community Centers, March 2000.
- Marlow, Rob, Director of Community Services, Boston Housing Authority, February 2000.
- Mitchell, Eric, Youth Services Coordinator, Boston Housing Authority, February 2000.
- Renzi, John, Boston Region Director, Department of Social Services, February 2000.
- Tan, Cheng Imm, Director, Office of New Bostonians, April 2000.
- Traphagen, Kathleen, Director, Boston 2 to 6 Initiative, February 2000.
- Taylor, Adrian, Dorchester YMCA, February 2000.
- Klien Walker, Debbie, Assistant Commissioner for Maternal and Child Health, Department of Public Health, April 2000.
- Wheeler, Patricia, United South End Settlements, April 2000.

Appendix C

Other Individuals and Organizations that Contributed Reports and Information

Ken Barnes, Jobs and Community Services, Boston Redevelopment Authority/Economic Development and Industrial Corporation, Boston.

Leslie Claytor, Action for Boston Community Development, Boston.

Laura Gang, Parents United for Childcare, Boston.

Kelly Graceffa, Childcare Choices of Boston.

Eileen Haggarty, Parents United for Childcare.

Hotline Volunteer, Parental Stress Hotline, Parents and Children's Services, Brookline.

Barbara Jackson, Action for Boston Community Development, Head Start.

Connie Kane, Action for Boston Community Development.

Chris Sieber, Action for Boston Community Development.

Rod Southwick, Massachusetts Office of Childcare Services, Boston.

Appendix D

Resources for Assistance in the Development of Child Well-Being Indicator Projects*

1) Improved Outcomes for Children Project

Center for the Study of Social Policy

The Improved Outcomes for Children Project (IOCP) helps communities collect information to make outcome assessments. They aid communities in identifying the measures needed to make assessments and in finding agencies that can collect the necessary data and make reasonable interpretations of the results.

Contact: Catherine Murray
Publications Department
Center for the Study of Social Policy
1250 I Street, NW, Suite 503
Washington, D.C. 20005
(202)371-1565
e:mail: cmurray@cssp.org

www.cssp.org

2) National Outcome Work Groups

Center for the Study of Social Policy

The National Outcome Work Groups identify critical child, youth, parents/families and community level indicators to be used in evaluating community-based programs. For each indicator, evaluation resources are available on line, including: introduction and definition of the characteristic, literature review, references, annotated bibliography, suggested measures or instruments (abstracts), analysis suggestions, psychometrics and links to additional sources of information.

<http://ag.arizona.edu/fcr/fs/nowg/index.html>

* These resources were excerpted from the following compilation: "Indicators of Child, Youth and Family Well-being: A Selected Inventory of Existing Projects." Washington D.C.: *Child Trends*. February 2000.

3) National Neighborhood Indicators Project

The Urban Institute

The National Neighborhood Indicators Project (NNIP) is working with local institutions in selected American cities to develop neighborhood-level information systems containing social indicator data that can be used to support comprehensive community building. Boston is one of the NNIP's partner cities (see next resource).

The NNIP website offers a series of handbooks, case studies and other tools on the use of information in community capacity building.

Contact: Tom Kingsley
Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center
The Urban Institute
2100 M Street, NW, Suite 500
(202)261-5585

www.urban.org/nnip

4) Boston Community Building Network

The Boston Foundation

The Boston Community Building Network coordinates major projects of the foundation that advance a collaborative community building approach to the reduction of urban poverty and other key issues in Greater Boston. These include:

The Boston Community Building Curriculum

The curriculum offers training to grassroots leaders in community building skills such as: identifying community assets, needs and priorities; developing a vision and plan for neighborhood improvements; supporting children and families; and mobilizing a community and its partners around a shared plan of action.

The Boston Children and Families Database (BCFD)

The BCFD puts information into the hands of community organizations and residents for community-driven planning, assessment, and evaluation. The database is housed at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Northeastern University coordinates its technical development and expansion.

The Boston Indicators of Change, Progress and Sustainability Project

This project expresses shared goals and values as indicators to inform, monitor, evaluate and drive change at the neighborhood, city and regional levels. It was developed with more than 300 cross-sectoral participants. A draft report was released in October of 2000 and a final report will be released in early 2002.

Contact: Charlotte Kahn
Boston Community Building Network
The Boston Foundation
75 Arlington Street, 02116
(617)3381700

www.tbf.org

5) Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families

The Aspen Institute

The Roundtable offers internet-based resources for comprehensive community initiatives. The Roundtable's website is designed to provide information about current projects through on-line publications and working papers, as well as a catalogue of measurement instruments related to community research. The Community Building Resources Exchange lists links to a wide range of materials covering the theoretical bases and practical applications of comprehensive, community building approaches to neighborhood revitalization.

Contacts: Anne C. Kubisch, Director
Roundtable on Comprehensive
Community Initiatives
The Aspen Institute
281 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10010
(212) 677-5510

www.aspeninst.org
www.commbuild.org

6) Outcome Measurement Resource Network

United Way of America

The Outcome Measurement Resource Network makes outcome measurement resources available to health and human service programs and communities.

The Resource Network contains excerpts from and ordering information for the United Way of America's outcome measurement manual, "Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach, and other publications.

Technical assistance is also available to united Way member organizations.

Contact: Meg Plantz
United Way of America
701 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703)836-7112

www.unitedway.org/outcomes

7) Massachusetts Community Health Information Project

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health

MassCHIP is an on-line data system that provides access to 24 data sets that cover vital statistics, communicable disease, socio-demographics, selected MDPH and other human service agency program utilization data. Many of the data sets are specific to children.

The system makes state and community-level data available through standard and customized report formats.

Contacts: Saul Franklin or Jamie Wilkins
Bureau of Family and Community Health
Massachusetts Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street, 5th floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02108
(617)624-5238

www.state.ma.us/dph/ose/mchphome.htm

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The Office for Children and Families (OCF) is a program of the Mayor's Office of Community Partnerships. OCF seeks to create and support vehicles that improve the well-being of Boston children (birth to 13 years old) and their families by enhancing knowledge, increasing access to resources, building partnerships, and strengthening the City's communities, neighborhoods, and organizations.

Jennifer Freeman offers consulting services in the areas of strategic planning, organizational and program development, and public policy analysis and research. Her work draws on over 15 years of management, public policy and program development experience in the government and non-profit sectors. Her areas of expertise include child and family services, workforce development, early education and housing.

Liz O'Connor is a consultant specializing in strategy and development for non-profits and government agencies. She has worked in strategic planning and policy development for a wide range of organizations including city and state education and human services agencies, law enforcement agencies, health care organizations and child care organizations. She was once the director of a community based adult literacy program, and taught philosophy in the SUNY and UMASS systems.