REPORT TO JESSIE BALL duPONT FUND
ON PROJECT PROGRESS
IN CONSTRUCTING A COMMUNITY DATABASE FOR ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

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SUMMARY

This Progress Report summarizes the work conducted from April 2010 to February 2011 by the Maternal Child Health and Education Research and Data Center (MCHERDC) at the University of Florida (UF), in partial fulfillment of the work tasks outlined in Grant 2010-008 awarded to the University of Florida by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund.

The main goal of this project is to create an integrated cross-agency community information system which will facilitate county-wide efforts to reduce the number and length of stay of children in foster care.

The objectives of this project are:

- Integrate publicly available and agency specific data
- Provide access to aggregative level data
- Generate maps of neighborhood conditions for intervention prioritizations
- Track spatial-temporal changes to neighborhoods

Achievement of these objectives will contribute to foster-care entry reduction efforts by creating a decision support framework that will:

- Engage the community
- Improve child welfare policies
- Support research in place-based intervention

In the following sections we provide a brief summary of the main activities during the past year. The main achievements of the project in its first year are:

- Secured Data Sharing Agreements with two major agencies in our community serving children
- Secured commitment from thirteen other local agencies serving children and families
- Entered information from 14 sensitive and 56 non sensitive sources into the prototype community database:
  - Prepared outreach materials and data sharing agreements and started the development of a Community Action Resources Atlas (CARA) website.
- Convened meetings with local child serving agencies in 2010, held on 5/18, 5/21, 5/26, 5/28, 6/3, 6/10, 6/15, 6/22, and 7/28. The purpose was to develop partnerships and operationalize our efforts to assist the agencies.
PARTNERSHIPS TO DATE

Below is a map of the administrative jurisdictions (local governments) in Alachua County followed by a list of agencies that have agreed to be contributing data partners in this project. Some partners have already signed data sharing agreements. Some partners are state agencies, some are local agencies with a countywide mandate, others are local municipalities with limited areas of jurisdiction within Alachua County. For certain data elements we have to coordinate not only across agencies with different missions but also across agencies with limited geographic areas of applicability. For example, as seen in Figure 1, there are ten local governments in Alachua County (7 cities, 2 towns 1 municipality). Most local governments provide policing services limited to their area of jurisdiction. Therefore, each police department is confined in collecting data on domestic violence or child abuse to their area of jurisdiction only. Each collects that data in their own format and their own information system, which at the present time are not integrated or compatible with that of other police departments.

Figure 1: Ten Local Governments in Alachua County
List of Committed Contributing Data Partners

Federal Agency
- U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

State Agencies
- Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- Department of Health (DOH)
- Office of Family Safety (OFS)
- Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)
- GeoPlan Center, University of Florida

Countywide Agencies
- Partnership for Strong Families (PSF)
- Child Abuse Prevention Project (CAPP) / United Way of North Central Florida
- Early Learning Coalition (ELC)
- Meridian Behavioral Healthcare (MBH)
- Alachua County Public Schools (ACPS)

Limited Jurisdiction Local Agencies
- Alachua County Sheriff's Office (ACSO) – Municipal Area Only
- City of Gainesville
- City of Alachua
- City of High Springs

We prepared two important documents that are necessary for a successful implementation of a multi-agency coordinating effort in other locations. One describes Data Holdings, Data Linkage Processes, and Security Provisions of the Maternal Child Health and Education Research and Data Center. The second describes the legal and the professional responsibilities of the Maternal Child Health and Education Research and Data Center in securing the protection of confidential data. Both documents are part of the template Data Sharing Agreement that MCHERDC must sign with its confidential data Contributing Partners. To date we have signed Data Sharing Agreements with the Department of Children and Families and with the School Board of Alachua County.

DATA ELEMENTS COLLECTED TO DATE

Our first step in developing a community database was to identify the main domain areas that apply to the field of foster care. These domain areas provide the conceptual framework for the collection of agency data as well as for the organization, classification, and the standardization of the data. Based on an extensive literature review and with input from practicing professionals in the field of foster care, we identified five domain areas that function as gateways into Foster Care:
• Domestic Violence
• Physical Abuse
• Neglect
• Substance Abuse
• Sexual Abuse

These five domains were further broken down into twenty data components that precipitate Foster Care entry. These data components are:

• Poverty
• Crime
• Inadequate Social Services
• Insufficient Social Services
• Inadequate Job Skills
• Unemployment
• Parental Abuse History
• Teen Parenthood
• Single Parenthood
• Recurrent Child Abuse
• Social Isolation
• Mental Illness
• Unwanted Pregnancy
• School Truancy
• Disciplinary Referrals
• Poor Academic Performance
• Juvenile Offenses
• Prematurity
• Low Birth Weight
• Developmental Disability

For each of these data components we compiled separate data elements. To date we have compiled a library of 70 data elements, 14 of which are sensitive and must comply with confidentiality protection provisions. These data elements, along with those to be collected during the second year of this grant, will be included in the community database. We have organized these 70 data elements into three tables:

• Socioeconomic and Demographic Data Elements
• Non-sensitive Data Elements
• Sensitive Data Elements

For each data element we provide: data element description, mapping unit, year it covers, provider, source, original source format, status of collection, status of compilation, status of documentation, comments related to level of confidence in the data. We consider the provider to be the agency that last processed the data element.
EXAMPLES OF DATABASES COLLECTED TO DATE

The 70 data elements shown in the previous section, for now, are stored in 44 separate databases. These 44 databases, in addition, contain more data elements than these 70 data elements which were thought to be relevant to the scope of this project. Below is a breakdown by numbers of databases collected and processed to date as they relate to the 70 data elements that were considered relevant to this project:

- The 36 socioeconomic and demographic data elements are stored in 36 separate databases
- The 20 non sensitive data elements are stored in 5 databases
- The 14 sensitive data elements are stored in 3 databases

Each of these databases has two components: a map and its corresponding tabular descriptive information. For example, for a point location on the map, there could be several data elements that relate to that location. While the point location on the map could show the address of a residence, the data elements in its corresponding tabular information could show the number of households living in that address, the number of children living in each of the households in that address, the school performance or truancy of each of the children in each of the households, etc. This means that for each data element, one point location on the map relates to more than one observation. The complex relation between location and its corresponding descriptive information enables the creation from one single database or even from one single data element in that database, of several types of maps (each with a different theme),

Each database, for now, is stored in a shape file data model. A shape file data model is a composite file format which stores information in five separate files with the following formats: .SHP, .SHX, .DBF, .PRJ and .XML. Following are examples of six databases:

- Previous Address of Homeless Children database
- Bus Stops for Homeless Children database
- Child Abuse and Neglect database
- Domestic Abuse database
- Public Housing database
- Sex Offenders database
EXAMPLES OF PROJECT VISUAL PROTOTYPES

The following project visual prototypes show the potential of overlay and integration of currently separate and isolated data. They show the capability of drilling down to the neighborhood scale.

Figure 2: Domestic Violence Density

Figure 3: Co-location of Homeless Children & Religious Centers

Figure 4: Medicaid Births Density

Figure 5: Child Abuse Density

Figure 6: Juvenile Offenses by Census Block

Figure 7: Sex Offenders, Bus Stops and Walkability
PROJECT WEBSITE AND OUTREACH MATERIALS

We are developing a website, CARA, expressly for this project. As shown in Figure 8 we have already secured a Uniform Resource Locator on the World Wide Web: http://cara.peds.ufl.edu and we will gradually populate the site with project products. We envision this website to fulfill two main goals:

- Serve as a repository for making important documents related to this project readily available (e.g., data elements, summary reports, presentations, training materials, user suggestions for improvement, contacts, etc.).

- Serve as a public repository of products generated by this project. We envision this portion of the site to resemble a simple and easy to use atlas. A screen shot of the site’s homepage is reproduced below.

Figure 8: Home page of the CARA Website
As shown in the next page, we have also created a poster that summarizes the conceptual and technical processes that undergird the project. This poster can be printed in a large scale wall format or it can be printed in a standard one page format for distribution to policy makers, community activists, and potential future contributing data partners.
COMMUNITY ACTION RESOURCE ATLAS (CARA)
Developing a Community Information System for Alachua County’s Children

http://cara.peds.ufl.edu

The Maternal Child Health and Education Research and Data Center (MCHERDC) at the University of Florida is in the process of developing a Community Information System for Alachua County’s Children to serve as a publicly available Community Action Resource Atlas (CARA).

The main goal of this project is to improve understanding of social determinants of health and to reduce health disparities among Alachua County’s children, with a special focus on reducing the number of children entering Foster Care.

CARA will provide open access to protected data and information, it will integrate protected data and information with other community data, it will help measure indicators at a neighborhood level, and it will provide a platform for tracking change over time.

Data contributing partners to date are: the State Department of Children and Families, the Partnership for Strong Families, the Child Abuse Prevention Project, the Early Learning Coalition, the Meredith Behavioral Healthcare, the State Department of Juvenile Justice, the School Board of Alachua County, the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office, the City of Gainesville’s Police Department, the City of Alachua’s Police Department, the City of High Springs Police Department, the Housing and Urban Development federal agency (HUD) and the GeoPlan Center at the University of Florida.

For ideas on how to benefit or to contribute to this project please contact us at 382.334.1900 or at mcherdc@peds.ufl.edu.

Measure Social Vulnerability by Neighborhood