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Agenda for Children Tomorrow (ACT) experienced a year of transition with the appointment of Linda Selvin as the new Executive Director. Ms. Selvin brings to ACT 20 years of combined experience as a service provider and a grantmaker. Prior to joining ACT, she served for 10 years as Executive Director of the New York Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, following four years as Director of Programs for Learning Leaders (formerly the New York City School Volunteer Program). Ms. Selvin was also a Program Officer at the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and Grants Manager at the William T. Grant Foundation.

**Mission:** ACT is a unique public-private partnership that promotes the well-being of children, families and neighborhoods throughout New York City through partnerships with social services, economic development, and the public, nonprofit and private sectors.

ACT pursues its mission by:

- Promoting the integration and coordination of public and private services offered to children and families.
- Developing accessible, culturally appropriate entrees to services.
- Building the capacity of youth, parents and families to advocate for themselves.
- Assisting service providers including City government to identify and build on community strengths.

## Program Highlights

### BUSHWICK IMPACT Family Resource Center

Bushwick IMPACT (Informing More Parents Across the Community Together) serves and supports families with children from birth to eight years of age in Bushwick, Brooklyn. Our vibrant storefront offers bi-lingual parent-child literacy activities and other programs promoting positive parent-child interaction, healthy child development, early childhood education, and engaged and effective parenting. IMPACT also develops leadership, advocacy and “navigating” skills among community parents; provides information and referrals that address a broad range of pressing family needs; and builds and leads partnerships that promote interaction and coordination of services and resources among close to 100 community organizations, educators and City agencies striving to meet the needs of Bushwick families with young children.

A key factor in our success continues to be our training of mothers from the community as Parent Leaders who conduct outreach, implement programs, provide support to parents, and offer a reassuring and highly effective peer-to-peer interface with community residents. In 2008-09, IMPACT trained 15 new “Parent Ambassadors” as part of *Born Learning*, a national public engagement campaign of the United Way of America that helps parents, grandparents and caregivers explore ways to turn everyday moments into fun learning opportunities for young children. IMPACT’s work with *Born Learning* is supported by the United Way of New York City.

In 2008-09, Bushwick IMPACT's achievements included the following:

- Leadership Development: Trained 15 Parent Ambassadors who conducted community-wide informational campaigns reaching 172 parents, resulting in 108 new parents to IMPACT.
- Family Literacy: Conducted 152 family literacy sessions attended by 424 parents and children.
- Family Support: Provided referrals and assistance to 302 families, and held 33 support-groups attended by 44 mothers.
- Child Development: Made 486 referrals that helped 185 parents find childcare, 49 children find special needs services, and conducted 55 parent-infant playgroups and 12 workshops for 93 parents and 60 babies.

In addition, 200 children participated in play groups and story hours during the times their parents attended workshops and support groups. These groups focused on early learning and socialization.

## **IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE**

The ICPI pilot project (2007-2008) was designed to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to the fastest-growing communities in New York City -- from West Africa, Mexico and South Asia. ACT assisted in implementing and managing the project, including technical assistance and capacity-building for program development and coalition-building.

ACT's final evaluation of the implementation and outcomes of ICPI in 2008-09 found that the project:

- Served 148 immigrant families involving 305 children.
- Prevented the removal of 15 at-risk children from their homes, saving approximately \$496,000 in potential child welfare expenses for the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS).
- Filled 97 requests for interpretation.
- Provided counseling services to 86 families.
- Provided 113 case consultations.
- Facilitated 26 requests for case conferences.

## **YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD**

In March 2008, the Assistant Commissioner of ACS's Office of Youth Development (OYD) asked ACT for assistance in developing a new Youth Advisory Board. The purpose of the Board is to offer a youth perspective on foster care policy and program issues; advise the ACS Commissioner and other key decision-makers; and make recommendations on improving current foster care policy and programming.

ACT collaborated with OYD to form a youth Steering Committee to develop the structure and mission of the Youth Advisory Board. ACT then advised and assisted OYD and the Committee with agenda development, facilitation, outreach, preparation of documents and handouts, preparation of meeting minutes, and overseeing the interview process for potential Advisory Board members.

ACT's ultimate goal was to build the capacity of the Youth Advisory Board to operate independently, with the Steering Committee becoming the Executive Board. Currently, the Office of Youth

Development is undergoing restructuring. The Youth Advisory Board will reconvene once OYD has completed this process.

## **CRADLE**

CRADLE, a federally-funded pilot project in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, was designed to identify and resolve problems that arose when high-risk families were involved with multiple public agencies. In 2008-09, ACT collaborated with CRADLE to present a series of trainings to increase the ability of community and government service-providers to effectively access -- and help families benefit from -- City agency resources. Five sessions on "Demystifying Children's Services" drew over 300 attendees including ACS staff, healthcare providers, staff of community-based organizations, and others.

CRADLE ended in early 2009, with some of its results adapted to solve similar problems citywide. The program's success encouraged local community members to expand on its work, with greater focus on parent advocacy. They renamed themselves the Bed-Stuy Advocates and were incorporated as a 501(c)3 organization in August 2009. Having coordinated programming and organized work groups for CRADLE, ACT went on to provide technical assistance to community members as they transitioned into an independent nonprofit organization.

## **COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES**

Since 2006, ACT has played a vital role in facilitating the planning and implementation of ACS's Community Partnership Initiatives (recently renamed the Community Partnership Project or CPP). The project's primary goal is to promote "a rethinking and reorientation" of child welfare work toward integrated, localized service models that can be tailored to the unique needs and resources of individual communities.

### **Bridge Builders Community Partnership Initiative**

ACT has worked with the Bridge Builders CPI in the southwest Bronx for over seven years and is now facilitating its transition into an independent 501(c)3 administered by the community. Over the past year, ACT guided the transition process by facilitating and supporting the project in four areas: strategic planning, organizational development, leadership development and capacity-building.

### **East New York Community Partnership Initiative**

From ACT's work with the original Neighborhood Network through facilitating the Network's successful proposal to become a CPI, our role has been significant in the East New York community. Over the last two years, ACT transitioned the Network's leaders to become the co-chairs of the CPI and trained new leaders to head four working groups. ACT also assisted with budgeting, meeting oversight, strategic guidance, and applying for renewed funding for what has been renamed the Community Partnership Project.

## **INFORMATIONAL FORUMS**

Last October, ACT presented two informational forums, entitled "Community and the ACS RFP: Infusing a Community Approach to Child Welfare Services," to facilitate the response to a Request for

Proposals issued by the Administration for Children's Services. We shared our expertise in building, supporting and sustaining coalitions and partnerships, and provided technical assistance in the collection, analysis and usage of data to support the proposals. Our 150 attendees engaged in discussion that included accessing data and creating formal partnerships, via subcontracts, between larger child welfare providers and smaller and/or non-traditional providers. The forums were presented in partnership with the Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA).

## STAKEHOLDERS EVENT

Our annual Oversight Meeting, renamed the Stakeholders Event, took place in April at NYU. "Reducing Poverty in New York City" was attended by close to 100 people and highlighted Mayor Bloomberg's Center for Economic Opportunity and its partners. Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs opened the session, and Veronica White, the Center's Executive Director, presented components of the Center's initiatives. Two panels provided further insight into the Center's work and how it involves community-based organizations.

## E-NEWSLETTER

Our first *E-News* went out in August to 2,700 ACT stakeholders, highlighting recent publicity featuring the Bushwick IMPACT Family Resource Center. Our newsletter described New York City Council member Diana Reyna's (D-Brooklyn) visit to the Center; shared an article that ran on June 23, 2009 in *El Diario*, the City's largest and oldest Spanish-language daily newspaper; and provided a link to IMPACT's debut on "Brooklyn Neighborhood Beat" on Brooklyn Independent TV (TV BCAT - Channel 62).

## INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

ACT participates in the Fund for the City of New York's Incubator Program. Through this initiative, the Fund, which is a 501(c) 3 organization, serves as ACT's fiscal sponsor for grants and contributions, and manages some of its administrative tasks. In 2008-09, we were supported by the United Way of New York City, Carnegie Corporation, the Fund for Social Change, Heckscher Foundation for Children, and NYC Administration for Children's Services (in-kind).

This past year, ACT established an Advisory Board headed by Anne Williams-Isom, Deputy Commissioner, NYC Administration for Children's Services and William Schroeder, Special Counsel, Sullivan and Cromwell. The Board includes our founding executive director, Eric Brettschneider, as well as new members including Carol Kellermann, President of the Citizens Budget Commission, and Deborah Taylor of the Mayor's Office for Education and Community Development. The Board is composed of 13 individuals from the field of philanthropy, private industry and the public and non-public sectors. Like a Board of Directors, the Advisory Board is charged with seeing that ACT carries out its stated mission; overseeing all financial controls and reporting; ensuring that the organization meets the highest legal and ethical standards; and selecting, overseeing and supporting the executive director. The Advisory Board also assists in securing resources for ACT, including resources from the community.