Return on Investment of a Family Resource Center to the Child Welfare System:

Community Partnership Family Resource Center, Teller County, CO

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Background and Importance

Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are welcoming hubs of support, services, social connection, and opportunities for families that work with them utilizing a strengths-based, family-centered, multi-generational approach that reflect local contexts and needs.[i] Resources available through FRCs range from basic needs (such as food pantries and utility assistance) to parenting classes, peer support, family development, leadership development, and more. FRCs meet families where they are, help them build on their strengths, and connect them to resources so that they can sustainably meet their needs. There is evidence that FRCs generate economic returns to the community; a 2014 analysis found that the Alabama Network of FRCs provided a return on investment of $4.93 per dollar spent to the State of Alabama.[ii] These encouraging findings suggest that services provided across a network of FRCs have cost-saving implications at a state level.

FRCs play a key role in preventing child abuse and neglect. Child maltreatment is a pressing issue in the United States with far reaching effects for both individuals and systems.[iii] Child maltreatment affects at least one in seven children in the United States annually,[iv] and in 2015 the estimated cost of child abuse and neglect across the country was $428 billion.[v] Child maltreatment can have devastating effects on an individual's mental and physical health, and can also have far-ranging social and systemic impacts, including criminal justice, healthcare, education, and lifetime productivity costs. These broad impacts are estimated to cost society $268,544 over the course of an individual's life.[vi] Reducing child maltreatment not only benefits children, families and communities but also has the potential to save the country billions of dollars and allow for investment in other areas of need.[vii]

FRCs often partner with local child welfare jurisdictions to prevent child maltreatment across the child welfare continuum, from providing primary prevention services to serving families who have been screened out of child welfare[viii] to supporting families with open child welfare cases and post-reunification.[ix] The majority of child maltreatment cases include neglect[x] that often results from challenges accessing key resources such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision.[xi] A core FRC service is connecting families to these vital resources in their communities. Studies have found that FRCs increase protective factors for children's safety[xii] and that programs delivered by FRCs can reduce subsequent family involvement in the child welfare system.[xiii] Studies estimating the return on investment of FRCs to local child welfare systems would help advance our understanding of the important role that these community-based services play for families. Additionally, such studies can provide a more granular understanding of how the return on investment is realized within this particular sector.

The National Family Support Network (NFSN) is an organization made up of statewide networks of FRCs that aims to promote positive outcomes for all children, families, and communities by leveraging the collective impact of state networks and championing quality family support and strengthening practices and policies. Currently, 33 states and the District of Columbia have networks that include over 3,000 FRCs.[xiv] NFSN advances the family support field by convening member networks and facilitating knowledge-sharing; promoting family support best practices and evaluation; and raising the visibility of how FRC networks support families across the U.S. In 2020, with support from Casey Family Programs, NFSN contracted with the OMNI Institute to explore opportunities to leverage existing research, evaluation, and/or data to quantify the economic return on investment that FRCs provide to local child welfare systems.

Between December 2020 and January 2021, OMNI and NFSN reached out to NFSN member networks and reviewed existing evaluations of FRCs to identify potential opportunities that could serve as return on investment case studies. Through this process, OMNI explored five potential options and ultimately identified two cases that met the following criteria:

- There were available data demonstrating a plausible connection between FRC services and child welfare system outcomes (e.g., comparisons between families who did and did not receive services; longitudinal data showing improved outcomes upon FRC or program initiation);
- There were available quantitative data demonstrating that the child welfare system has benefited (e.g., through reductions in the incidence of child abuse/neglect);
- The site was willing to work with the OMNI team to field questions, share data (e.g., operational costs), and be highlighted in a final public report; and
- Sites represented demographically different communities being served by FRCs to, as best as possible, reflect the diversity of communities served by family support programs across the United States (e.g., rural versus urban locations; racial/ethnic makeup of the community).

In this report, we quantify the savings to the child welfare system in Teller County, Colorado, from investment in the Community Partnership Family Resource Center (CPFRC). CPFRC is the sole FRC that serves Teller County, and after beginning a formal partnership with the local child welfare system, there was an estimated 63% reduction in the rate of child abuse in the county (from 2015 to 2018).[xv] A companion report quantifies the savings to the child welfare system for Orange County, California, from investment in the Westminster Family Resource Center.[1]

Community Partnership Family Resource Center

CPFRC is a rural FRC established in 1992, and is the only FRC located in Teller County, Colorado. Teller County is in central Colorado and has a population of approximately 25,000. The most populous town of approximately 7,900 residents is Woodland Park, which is located about 20 miles from the closest city of Colorado Springs in neighboring El Paso County. Teller County is predominately White (94%), with 7.1% of residents identifying as Latinx of any race, 1.4% identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native, 1.1% identifying as Asian, and 1.0% identify as Black or African American. Just under 8% of residents live in poverty.[xvi]

CPFRC is a member of the Family Resource Center Association, Colorado's statewide network of FRCs. Member FRCs follow NFSN's Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support[xvii] that detail quality family support practices that are aligned with Family Support America's Principles of Family Support Practice and the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework.[xviii] CPFRC aims to help families build resilience, social capital, and a robust network of support so they are strong in the face of adversity and their children remain safe at home. Reflecting the Teller County population at large, families who receive services from CPFRC largely identify as White (87%).[xix] They often experience economic challenges, with 62% of families having no cash savings and 42% of families having incomes below 100% of the federal poverty line, relative to 8% across the county.[xx]

[1] This companion report can be accessed at omni.org/wfrc-roi.

Child Maltreatment Prevention Programming at CPFRC

In 2014, CPFRC began partnering with Teller County Department of Human Services (DHS) through Colorado Community Response,[xxi] a statewide program funded through Colorado's Office of Early Childhood. Colorado Community Response was designed to fill a gap in the child maltreatment prevention continuum by creating referral pathways from child welfare systems to local community support resources. It is a voluntary service for families who are reported to DHS for child abuse or neglect but are either screened out from receiving a response due to the nature of the report (e.g., it does not indicate an imminent safety threat) or are screened in but have their cases closed without the provision of child welfare services. DHS refers families who meet these qualifications to CPFRC to make connections to community resources, access one-time financial assistance and financial coaching, and access family support services aimed at increasing family strengths and parental knowledge. After a two-year pilot period, CPFRC implemented Colorado Community Response at scale beginning in 2016.

In 2016, CPFRC also expanded Family Development Services through funding provided by Colorado's Office of Early Childhood. Family Development Services is a primary prevention program designed to support families who are experiencing hardships, with the overall goal of improving family health and well-being, as well as reducing child maltreatment. This voluntary program is open to any family interested in participating (i.e., a referral is not required) and who indicates that they are experiencing challenges meeting their needs during a screening process. Through Family Development Services, CPFRC connects families to resources, and families set and work towards family-driven goals that build on strengths and increase protective factors for children's safety, as well as other aspects of family stability.

By 2016, Colorado Community Response funding created a direct link between families referred to DHS and CPFRC services, and funding for Family Development Services further expanded CPFRC's reach into the community. As such, there was a potential opportunity to examine the return on investment for CPFRC to the child welfare system by comparing child maltreatment outcomes prior to and after establishment of these new practices. Although Colorado Community Response and Family Development Services are stand-alone programs, CPFRC serves families through an integrated, family-centered approach; when a family engages with the center through either program, they also gain access to the many other programs, peer support, resources, and referrals available through the center. Therefore, we considered the return on investment to the child welfare system for CPFRC's overall approach to serving families, rather than the return on investment for either program alone.

Other Child Welfare Initiatives

To design the return on investment study, OMNI considered the broader context of child welfare initiatives within Teller County and Colorado with the goal of identifying time frames that would best isolate the effects of CPFRC. OMNI worked with Teller County DHS and CPFRC to identify other major programs and initiatives implemented in the years before and after 2016 that would likely impact families involved in the child welfare system. These events are described below:

- In 2013, Teller County DHS implemented a differential response model that changed the intake process for the child welfare system. Specifically, when a case of maltreatment is reported that is not life threatening or involving sexual abuse, a DHS team decides whether it qualifies for a differential response using considerations of past history and case details (e.g., prior involvement of DHS and/or the police). For cases that are determined to qualify for differential response, a DHS team member conducts a home visit with the whole family to discuss the concern. These cases typically end in a referral to services and no child-welfare documented case findings. Teller County views differential response as a prevention-focused approach to reported cases of maltreatment.

- On January 1, 2015, Colorado implemented a 24-hour statewide child abuse hotline. Prior to this, there was a county hotline for reporting suspected child maltreatment for Teller County that was open during typical business hours; outside of these hours, reports went to local police departments. The implementation of this statewide hotline established a process for all reports to be directly received by Teller County DHS.
- In 2017, Teller County began community awareness efforts to reduce stigma about parental help-seeking as part of a Child Maltreatment Prevention grant.
- In 2019, more restrictive eligibility requirements were put in place for Colorado Community Response due to a statewide evaluation. As a result, fewer families were eligible for and subsequently referred for participation.
- In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted service provision for both Teller County DHS and CPFRC.

Based on this timeline, we identified 2015 and 2018 as the time frames for comparison of child welfare outcomes that would best isolate the effects of CPFRC's programmatic shifts. We selected 2015 as the baseline year, as neither Colorado Community Response nor Family Development Services programming were available to the whole CPFRC population, but the statewide child abuse hotline and differential response models were in place. We selected 2018 as the comparison year, as it is the only year that both Colorado Community Response and Family Development Services were in full implementation with no other major system-wide changes taking place; it was also prior to programmatic changes and the impacts of the pandemic.

Methods

Social Return on Investment Model

Broadly, return on investment is a metric used to determine the efficiency of an investment, quantified as the net value of benefits relative to the net value of the investment. To calculate the return on investment of an FRC for the child welfare system, OMNI used a *social* return on investment (SROI) model. SROI describes the impact of a program or organization in dollar terms relative to the investment required to create that impact.[xxii] SROI studies often examine a broad range of costs and benefits, including social, environmental, and economic, that could influence individuals, communities, and society as whole.[xxiii] Because we were focused on benefits for the child welfare system in particular, we only considered that sector's outcomes. We excluded savings or increased expenditures in other social systems that may result from child maltreatment (e.g., educational, criminal justice, and health care costs), as well as other societal benefits (e.g., productivity).[xxiv]

Using the framework provided by the New Economics Foundation,[xxv] we specified our SROI model as follows:

$$\text{SROI} = \frac{(\text{Outcome of Interest} - \text{Deadweight}) \times \text{Attribution} \times \text{Monetized Value of the Outcome}}{\text{CPFRC Intervention Cost}}$$

Such that:

- *Outcome of Interest* is reduction in substantiated assessments of child maltreatment;
- *Deadweight* is the counterfactual number of substantiated assessments that would have occurred in the absence of CPFRC;
- *Attribution* is the share of those substantiated assessments that is attributable to, or results from, CPFRC;
- *Monetized Value of the Outcome* is the child welfare expenditure per substantiated assessment; and
- *CPFRC Intervention Cost* is the cost of operating CPFRC.

We used a variety of sources to estimate each aspect of the model. The following section identifies the data sources and outlines the calculations used to develop the estimates.

Data

In this section, we provide information on the underlying data used to estimate the SROI model depicted above, including narrative describing the data sources and underlying assumptions for each model component. In the side bars, we provide the corresponding estimates used for each model component.

Outcome and Deadweight

In this study, the outcome is child maltreatment as indicated by substantiated assessments in Teller County in 2018, the outcome year selected for analyses. Deadweight is represented by the number of substantiated assessments in 2015, the baseline year selected for analyses. Substantiated assessments refer to children that are experiencing verified cases of abuse and neglect and are one of the major sources of costs to child welfare systems across the country.[xxvi]

Data on the number of substantiated assessments in Teller County in 2015 and 2018 were gathered from the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) public database that reports on child maltreatment occurrences across the state.[xxvii] To control for changes in county population over time, the number of substantiated cases in each year was divided by the total number of children under the age of 18 in the county in that year as reported by the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS).[xxviii] This

OUTCOME AND DEADWEIGHT: RATES

Outcome Rate (2018):

$$\frac{30 \text{ substantiated assessments}}{4{,}368 \text{ children in Teller County}} = \mathbf{0.687\%}$$

Deadweight Rate (2015):

$$\frac{82 \text{ substantiated assessments}}{4{,}435 \text{ children in Teller County}} = \mathbf{1.849\%}$$

resulted in rates of substantiated cases of child maltreatment for 2018 (*Outcome*) and 2015 (*Deadweight*).

To calculate the reduction of substantiated assessments in Teller County from 2015 to 2018, we subtracted the Deadweight rate from the Outcome rate. This difference in rate was then multiplied by the number of children in Teller County in 2018, as reported by the ACS, to estimate the reduction in substantiated assessments in Teller County between 2015 and 2018, controlling for population changes. These calculations show that there was a 62.84% reduction in substantiated assessments from 2015 to 2018; adjusting for population changes, this translates to 51 fewer cases in 2018 compared to 2015.

OUTCOME AND DEADWEIGHT: DIFFERENCE

0.687%	-	1.849%	=	-1.162%	x	4,368	=	**51**
outcome rate		deadweight rate				children in Teller County in 2018		fewer substantiated assessments

Attribution

We estimated attribution as the proportion of children at risk for maltreatment in Teller County in 2018 that were reached by CPFRC (i.e., CPFRC's penetration rate). We used the assumption that the higher the proportion of at-risk children reached by CPFRC, the greater the share of reductions in child maltreatment that can be attributed to CPFRC services. Direct data were not available for either the number of children served by CPFRC, nor the number of children at risk for maltreatment in Teller County, so we used available data to estimate these values as described below.

Children Served by CPFRC

CPFRC served 722 unique families in 2018 and estimated that there was an average of two children per family. These data were used to estimate the total number of children served by CPFRC in 2018.

ATTRIBUTION: CHILDREN SERVED BY CPFRC

722	x	2	=	**1,444**
families served in 2018		estimated average number of children per family		children served

Children at Risk for Maltreatment in Teller County

We used two different approaches to estimate the number of children in Teller County at risk for child maltreatment using known risk factors for experiencing child maltreatment: (1) income-to-needs ratio and (2) child age.[xxix] The supporting calculations for each approach are detailed below.

Income-to-Needs Ratio. Income-to-needs (ITN) ratio, also known as percent of poverty, is the ratio of overall annual income to household or family size and serves as an indicator for socioeconomic status. Although child maltreatment occurs across all levels of socioeconomic status, poverty is one of the strongest predictors of whether a child will experience maltreatment, and is associated particularly strongly to rates of neglect (relative to abuse).[xxx] Though most low-income children will never be involved with the child welfare system, an income-based measure allows for a strong single-factor estimate of children at risk for child maltreatment.[xxxi]

To estimate the proportion of Teller County children that may be at risk for maltreatment, we used CPFRC evaluation and ACS data to extrapolate the ITN ratio of families served by CPFRC relative to the overall Teller County child population (those under 18 years old). For example, as shown in Table 1, 42% of families served by CPFRC have incomes below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and the ACS estimates there were 758 children with household incomes below 100% of the FPL in Teller County in 2018;[xxxii] therefore, we estimate that 318 children with household incomes below 100% of the FPL are at risk for child maltreatment in Teller County (42% of the 758 Teller County children in households with incomes below 100% of FPL equals 318 estimated at-risk children). We combined these calculations across ITN ratio brackets to estimate that the total number of children at risk for maltreatment in Teller County in 2018 is 1,479 (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. ATTRIBUTION ESTIMATE CALCULATIONS BASED ON INCOME-TO-NEEDS RATIO

ITN	Families served by CPFRC in 2018 (%)*	Teller County Child Population (#)	Teller County Children at Risk for Maltreatment (estimated #)
Below 100% FPL	42%	758	318
100-199% FPL	33%	1,880	620
200-299% FPL	14%	1,258	176
300%+ FPL	11%	3,306	364
Total:	100%	7,202	1,479

**Note: Values are rounded*

Child Age. Child age is another correlate of child maltreatment, with younger children experiencing maltreatment at a higher rate than older children.[xxxiii] We used data on the age of children who experienced maltreatment in Colorado in 2018 provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).[xxxiv] We calculated the percent of children who experienced maltreatment at each age from the DHHS data, then multiplied that by the number of children at that age grouping in Teller County in 2018 as provided by the ACS. We combined these calculations across all age groups (from 0-17) to estimate the total number of children at risk for child maltreatment in Teller County in 2018 (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. ATTRIBUTION ESTIMATE CALCULATIONS BASED ON CHILD AGE

Age	Children who Experienced Maltreatment in 2018 (%)*	Teller County U18 Population (#)	Teller County Children at Risk for Maltreatment (estimated #)
Under 5	40%	1,085	437
5-9	27%	1,423	388
10-14	24%	1,528	361
15-17	9%	967	85
Total:	100%	5,003	1,272

**Note: Values are rounded*

Determining Attribution Rate

We then used the estimated number of children served by CPFRC (1,444) relative to the estimated number of children at risk for maltreatment based on ITN ratio (1,479) and child age (1,272) to generate attribution estimates. Using the ITN ratio approach, the attribution estimate was 98%; using the age approach, the attribution estimate was 114%. Although imprecise, these estimates broadly suggest that CPFRC is reaching the population of children at risk for maltreatment in the county. Because of the convergence of these approaches on the estimated number of children at risk being reached by CPFRC, we used an attribution rate of 100% in the SROI calculations, attributing all 51 fewer substantiated cases in Teller County in 2018 to CPFRC.

ATTRIBUTION ESTIMATE:

Income-to-Needs Ratio:

$$\frac{1{,}444 \text{ children served by CPFRC in 2018}}{1{,}479 \text{ children at risk for maltreatment in 2018}} = \textbf{98\%} \text{ of reduction in cases attributed to CPFRC}$$

Child Age:

$$\frac{1{,}444 \text{ children served by CPFRC in 2018}}{1{,}272 \text{ children at risk for maltreatment in 2018}} = \textbf{114\%} \text{ of reduction in cases attributed to CPFRC}$$

Monetized Value of the Outcome

The monetized value of the outcome was defined as the cost incurred by the Teller County child welfare system for each substantiated assessment in 2018. We estimated this cost using the steady-state methodology in which the total annual child welfare costs in one year serve as a proxy for the lifetime child welfare costs of maltreatment cases in that year.[xxxv] Using this steady-state methodology, the total child welfare expenditures in a given year are divided by the total number of substantiated assessments in that year. To calculate the estimate specific to Teller County, we used the 2018 Actual Expenditures for the Child Welfare program as reported in the 2020 Teller County Adopted Budget and the number of substantiated assessments in 2018 as reported by the Colorado DHS (the same number used to calculate the outcome).[xxxvi] The resulting estimated cost of $49,026 per substantiated assessment is similar to the national average of child welfare expenditures of $47,255.[xxxvii]

MONETIZED VALUE OF THE OUTCOME

$$\frac{\$1{,}470{,}787 \text{ Teller County 2018 Child Welfare Expenses}}{30 \text{ substantiated assessments in 2018}} = \textbf{\$49,026} \text{ cost per substantiated assessment}$$

CPFRC Intervention Cost

The intervention cost is estimated as CPFRC's total annual expenses in 2018, based on the Community Coalition for Children and Families (doing business as Community Partnership Family Resource Center) Form 990, accessed via ProPublica.[xxxviii] CPFRC's total annual expenses for 2018 were $856,194.[xxxix]

INTERVENTION COST

CPFRC Intervention Cost:

CPFRC 2018 Expenses: **$856,194**

Results

Return on Investment

The estimates used to calculate CPFRC's return on investment to Teller County's child welfare system are provided below. The estimated net value of benefits is $2,500,326; that is, the reduction of 51 substantiated assessments saved the Teller County child welfare system $2,500,326 in 2018 compared to 2015. Relative to the net value of the investment in CPFRC in 2018, there is a return on investment of 292%, or $2.92. In other words, for every $1 invested in CPFRC, the Teller County child welfare system saved $2.92.

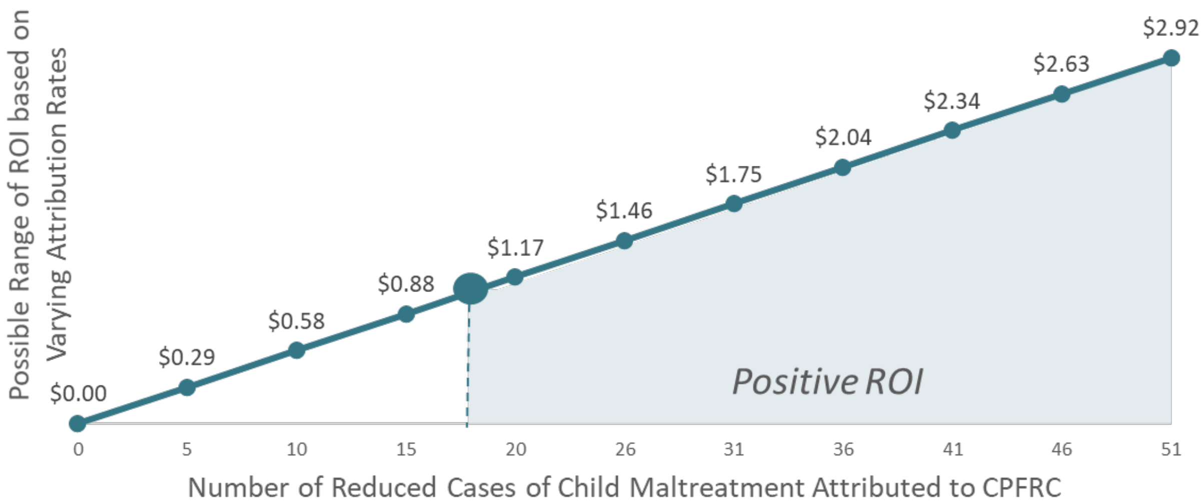
$$\frac{\underset{\text{reduction in substantiated assessments from 2015 to 2018}}{51} \times \underset{\text{attribution}}{100\%} \times \underset{\text{cost per substantiated assessment in 2018}}{\$49{,}026}}{\underset{\text{CPFRC annual expenses in 2018}}{\$856{,}194}} = \underset{\text{return on investment}}{\$2.92}$$

Sensitivity Analyses for Attribution

We conducted a sensitivity analysis by substituting the full range of attribution estimates (between 0 and 100%) into the overall SROI calculation. These sensitivity analyses allow us to identify the minimum number of reduced cases of child maltreatment attributed to CPFRC that results in a positive return on investment, specifically a return of at least $1.01. Results indicated the lowest possible attribution estimate for a positive return on investment is 35%; that is, if at least 18 of the 51 cases of reduced substantiated assessments are attributed to CPFRC, there is a positive return on investment to the child welfare system in Teller County.

FIGURE 1. SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS FOR ATTRBUTION

There is a positive return on investment if at least 18 of the 51 cases (35%) of reduced child maltreatment are attributed to CPFRC.



Conclusions

This report quantifies the estimated return on investment to a local child welfare system from investment in a Family Resource Center, providing economic evidence of the benefit of community-based family support services. These findings estimated a measurable benefit to the Teller County child welfare system provided by the Community Partnership Family Resource Center, with a return of $2.92 for every $1 invested.

OMNI examined the return on investment of a long-standing, well-established FRC that began implementing two new programs designed to serve children and families who may be at heightened risk for child welfare involvement. Specifically, CPFRC became a key referral resource for families screened out of child welfare and began implementing enhanced family supportive services through additional state funding. It is likely that CPFRC's nearly thirty-year history in Teller County and direct partnership with DHS allowed them to effectively serve families, and in turn generate economic benefits to the child welfare system. Further, it suggests that even in places where FRCs already exist, there is opportunity to expand impact and strengthen the benefit provided to families, communities, and the child welfare system through prevention programming designed to reach families most at risk for system involvement.

The CPFRC return on investment of $2.92 can be considered in tandem with the 2014 findings from the Alabama Network of FRCs, which provided an estimated return of $4.93 in immediate and long-term social value to the State of Alabama. The approach used to estimate the CPFRC return on investment differed in important ways from the study conducted in Alabama. This study examined one FRC rather than a network and focused solely on the return to one sector (i.e., the child welfare system) rather than the overall return across the state. Methodologically, we attached cost savings to changes in the target outcome (i.e., substantiated cases of child maltreatment) rather than to the services provided by FRCs, and we did not include broader family and societal impacts of child maltreatment.[xl] As such, we do not recommend making direct or relative comparisons between the estimated return on investment in Alabama of $4.93 and the CPFRC return on investment of $2.92. Rather, both findings provide evidence for the benefits of FRCs, and this study estimates one way that these benefits are realized by a county child welfare system in one community.

FRCs provide community- and family-responsive services designed to meet the unique needs of the people they serve. They often blend and braid funding, and families who participate in services under one funding stream are not typically limited to those services only, but rather have broad access to the FRC and the many resources and referral networks at its disposal. As a result, it is challenging to implement rigorous research practices that quantify the impact FRCs have on families, or on the child welfare system. In this report, we examined changes over time in child welfare outcomes in Teller County before and after CPFRC implemented programs aimed specifically at reducing child maltreatment. However, there are a number of limitations inherent in this approach:

- Best practice in SROI is utilization of a rigorous outcomes study to estimate the degree to which the program had positive benefits. With limited availability of studies examining child welfare outcomes for FRCs, we relied on an estimate of reductions in child maltreatment over time that corresponded with changes in programming delivered by the FRC. With this approach we were not able to track child welfare outcomes for families served directly by CPFRC, so relied on county-level data.
- Given the larger context of child welfare-related initiatives within Teller County and Colorado, our analysis was necessarily limited to comparisons of child maltreatment outcomes in two years (2015 and 2018) to best isolate the impact of programming at CPFRC. If it had been possible, including multiple years of data in the analyses would have provided a more robust understanding of how child maltreatment changed over time and would have made our estimates less susceptible to influence of other unknown system-level factors.
- There is not clear guidance on best practices in estimation of attribution in SROI models.[xxxx] The indicators of income-to-needs ratio and child age used to inform the attribution estimate provided imprecise estimates for the proportion of children at risk for child maltreatment in Teller County that CPFRC was reaching. It is possible that the attribution rate is less than 100%; that is, although the selection of 2015 and 2018 was designed to isolate the effects of CPFRC as closely as possible, other systemic changes not accounted for in this analysis (e.g., local economic conditions or school-based programs) could be responsible for some portion of the decrease in child maltreatment. Sensitivity analyses suggested that the return on investment is positive as long as the attribution rate is greater than 35%, but lower attribution rates return lower estimates of this return.
- Lastly, FRCs are as diverse as the communities that they serve. This study estimated the impact of one FRC in one county in Colorado and may not be generalizable to other communities; thus, this analysis should be considered a case study of the possible return on investment that this type of family support can provide. This report was conducted in tandem with estimates of the return on investment of another FRC in Orange County, California; those findings are available at omni.org/wfrc-roi.

Despite the challenges of conducting rigorous evaluations in the context of FRCs and the limitations of this case study, these findings contribute to a growing body of evaluative data on the benefits of FRCs for their communities.[xxxxi] Specifically, they provide support for the economic benefits that an FRC can provide to a local child welfare system by reducing incidences of child maltreatment. Because this evaluation used a pre-post design and relied on only two years of data, future evaluations should seek to replicate these findings using rigorous study designs and in other localities and contexts. However, such evaluations rely on the availability of sufficient data; to support these efforts, FRCs, networks and states should pursue efforts to directly link data systems that would allow tracking of service provision by FRCs and child welfare outcomes over time. In the meantime, the findings here suggest that in Teller County, Colorado, CPFRC provides a meaningful return on investment to the child welfare system, with a return of nearly three dollars for every one dollar invested.

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[xxxv] *Child welfare services and their associated costs vary widely (e.g., the cost of an in-home service is lower than out-of-home placement) and the length of time that services last can also vary widely, from single points of contact to years of support. However, there are no longitudinal studies that provide direct estimates of the average cost to the child welfare system from a substantiated case; therefore, researchers have drawn on the steady state methodology*

(used in other fields such as chronic illness) to provide a best estimate. As applied here, this approach assumes that the types and length of services provided by a child welfare agency remains relatively steady year over year, and that the average cost captures the variation in types of and length of services provided to families and their varying circumstances. Birnbaum, H., Leong, S., & Kabra, A. (2003). Lifetime medical costs for women: Cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and stress urinary incontinence. *Womens Health Issues*, *13*(6), 204–213. doi: 10.1016/j.whi.2003.07.001; Fang, X., Brown, D. S., Florence, C. S., & Mercy, J. A. (2012). The economic burden of child maltreatment in the United States and implications for prevention. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *36*(2), 156-165. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2011.10.006

[xxxvi] *The annual Teller County Adopted Budgets report the actual spending for each department two years prior. The budget is publicly available at* www.co.teller.co.us. *To ensure funding included in the estimate of the monetized value of the outcome was not also included in the estimate of the intervention cost, we confirmed with CPFRC that they did not receive any funding from the child welfare division of Teller County Department of Human Services in 2018.*

[xxxvii] *$47,255 is an inflation-adjusted estimate in 2019 dollars calculated by Safe & Sound (2020) based on the original estimate in 2016 dollars calculated by Child Trends (2018).* Safe & Sound (2020). *The economics of child abuse: A study of California and its counties, Technical Appendix*. https://economics.safeandsound.org/static_reports/Safe.Sound.-.2020.Economics.Report.-.Technical.Appendix.pdf; Child Trends (2018). *Child welfare financing SFY 2016: A survey of federal, state, and local expenditures*. https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CWFSReportSFY2016_ChildTrends_December2018.pdf

[xxxviii] *Given that we examined change in substantiated cases from 2015 to 2018 as the outcome, an alternative approach is to calculate the difference in CPFRC's annual expenses in 2015 and 2018 as the estimate of intervention cost. This alternative approach assumes that only new expenditures contribute to the reduction in substantiated cases. We opted not to use this approach given that FRCs take a comprehensive, family-centered approach to services (e.g., those families referred to CPFRC through the Colorado Community Response program could access any of the services available at CPFRC, many of which have been available prior to 2015). The implementation of Colorado Community Response and Family Support Services do not reflect just new services, but also a new model of partnering with the county and making services available to families. In addition, FRCs are funded through a variety of mechanisms, including programming funded by grants that change over time, and they blend and braid funding in ways that make it difficult to isolate costs associated with county-wide outcomes. Therefore, we were concerned that using the difference in expenses could underestimate the total costs of the intervention.*

[xxxix] Per communications with Teller County DHS, CPFRC did not receive any funding from Teller County's child welfare division in 2018.

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