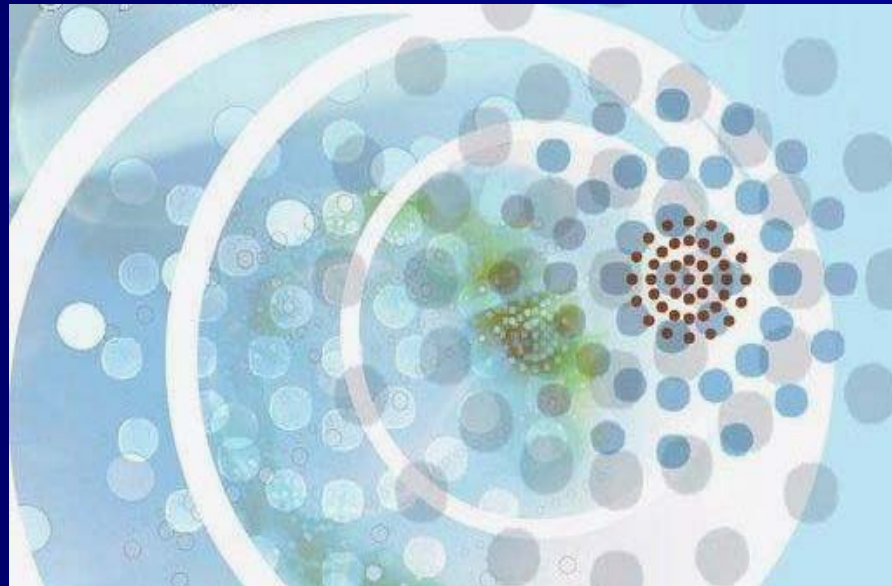


A Theory of Change for Center-based Family Support Practice and Research



**Anita Lightburn, MSS, Ed.D.
Fordham University**

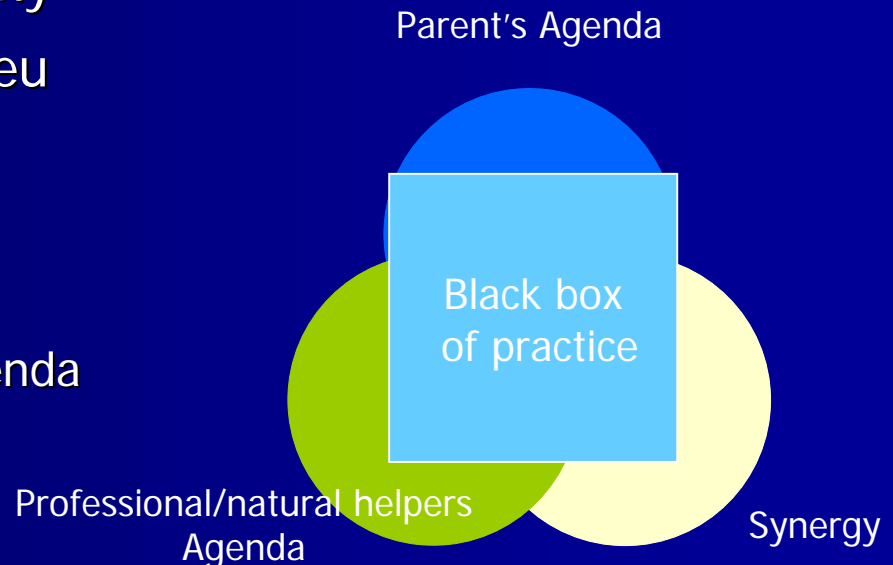
2005 Building on Family Strengths Conference
June 23, 2005 • 2:45/15/2005 pm - 3:45 pm

Practice/Research Questions

- What is Center-based Family Support – how does practice in these centers support change?
- Why Center-based Family Support is important as a system of care/ building the “community” that is the “family that will not go away”
- What constitutes useful evaluations of center-based family support?
- Is it a substantial alternative to out of home placement for children and parents at risk and in distress?

What Contributes to Change for Practice and Evaluation

- Thinking about and conceptualizing this type of family support community
 - the community milieu
 - the black box of practice
 - Parent's Agenda
 - Professional's Agenda
 - Synergy



Developing Focus for Evaluation With a Theory of Change

“Program evaluation as a distinct field of professional practice was born of two lessons...

- First, the realization that there is not enough money to do all the things that need doing; and
- Second, even if there were enough money, it takes more than money to solve complex human and social problems.
- ***As not everything can be done, there must be a basis for deciding which things are worth doing.***

- Michael Quinn Patton, 1997, p. 11

What Is Worth Doing – Steps Along the Way

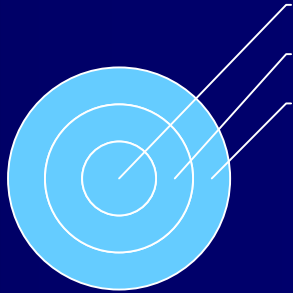
“Defining Sensitive Outcomes”

- Using a theory of change to define steps along the way for families, staff and the family center community
- Explaining change through mediating processes (relationship, the community milieu, synergy, ...)

Center-based Family Support Practice

- Provides a community milieu – a unique life force melding resources together to protect and support growth and development of children and parents. That becomes a “beacon in the community” (Warren-Adamson & Lightburn, 2005)
 - For mandated and community families
 - **Important resource for poor and marginalized**
 - A special system of care – coordinated with a continuum of services (co-located services to a full wraparound care)

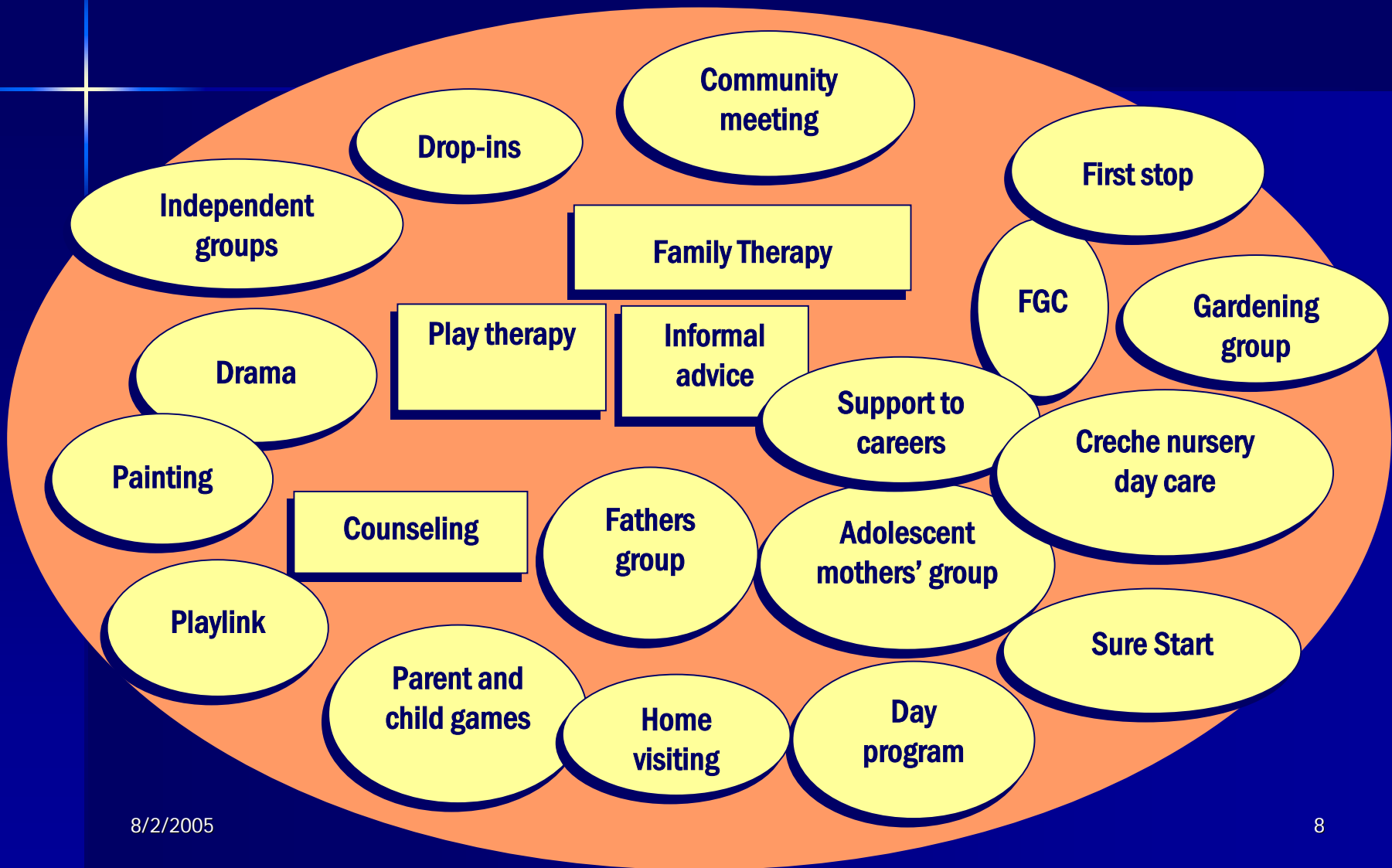
Where Are Center-based Family Support Programs?



Schools,
Community Centers,
Community Agencies,
Churches,
Housing Projects,
Neighborhoods



The Integrated Family Center – UK Example



Hall Neighborhood House Family Support Program



Intensive Day Program:
4 days a week

8/2/2005

Anita Lightburn, FSS

What we have learned

- Family support programs produce a range of effects for child cognitive and social development, parental attitudes and behavior
 - when there are for example
 - parent groups rather than home visits.
 - peer support opportunities for parents
 - programs goals for parent self development
 - professional staff used rather than paraprofessional (Abt (2001) study of 665 FSP)
- Effect sizes varied as a function of program characteristics (staffing, intensity (Abt, 2001; (Duggan, et al, 1999, Gutterman, 1997)
- Best practices doubled effects (Abt 2001)

What we have learned

- FSP contributed long term effect to family self sufficiency and to child safety (Abt 2001)
- Parenting programs, & multi family groups psychosocial education well researched, results dependant on community support variables, & program fit with parent/family population need and capabilities (Dore & Lee, 1999; McFarlane 2002; Berry & Cash, 2001)
- Education & support led to significant improvements in parents' knowledge of mental health service & perceptions of self-efficacy (Bickman, et al, 1998) & in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety in mothers (Ireys et al, 1996; 2001)

The families' perspective

- Centers are less stigmatizing
 - more engaging, and
 - provide a more stable family-like experience for participants.
 - Inclusive - a community of helpers of which to be part (staff and families together)
 - Feels more like school than going for mental health services, which can be so depressing
 - Is the family that will not go away

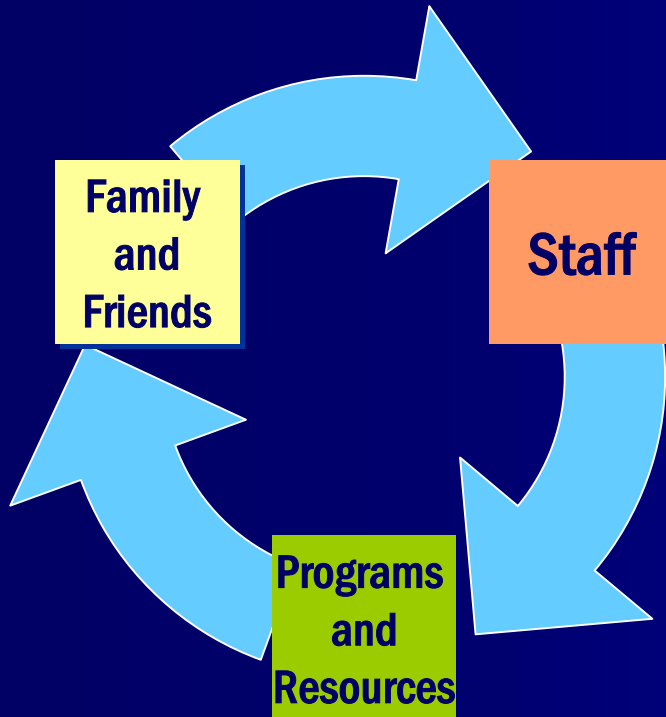
Family Support Community

- "You, (the staff) have been like mother and father to us."

"You showed us a new way of life and a way to make meaning of our life and find our way. "

" We became a family. We stuck together, we mourned together, we lost a sister and her son. You have put us on a path that was hard to find....." FAMILY SUPPORT

The need for community



We need to place the associational community in the great void between systems and individuals

- 90% of family services are counseling
- 10% are family advocacy & facilitating community service

■ Family Service Association Study 1997

The Dynamic Processes of Family Center Practice

Community Milieu

- Organizes the community environment through integrating normal life experiences
- Brings together therapeutic approaches, support, education, recreation in an *"interactive complexity... a developmental synergy that supports change"*
- *"It's joint and aggregate involvement, it's not myself taking risks... it's others making contributions to management of that risk... I couldn't bear it on my shoulders alone"*

Voice of a service provider (Hess, McGowan, & Botsko, 2000)

Building the “Community” – *“The Family that Will Not Go Away”*

- The importance of a system of care – for family and child welfare
 - Establishing connection and continuity
 - Increasing developmental outcomes (early intervention, increasing the achievement gap)
 - Reducing risks for child abuse (increasing protective factors, reducing isolation, enhancing parenting and family relationships)
 - Replacing residential treatment

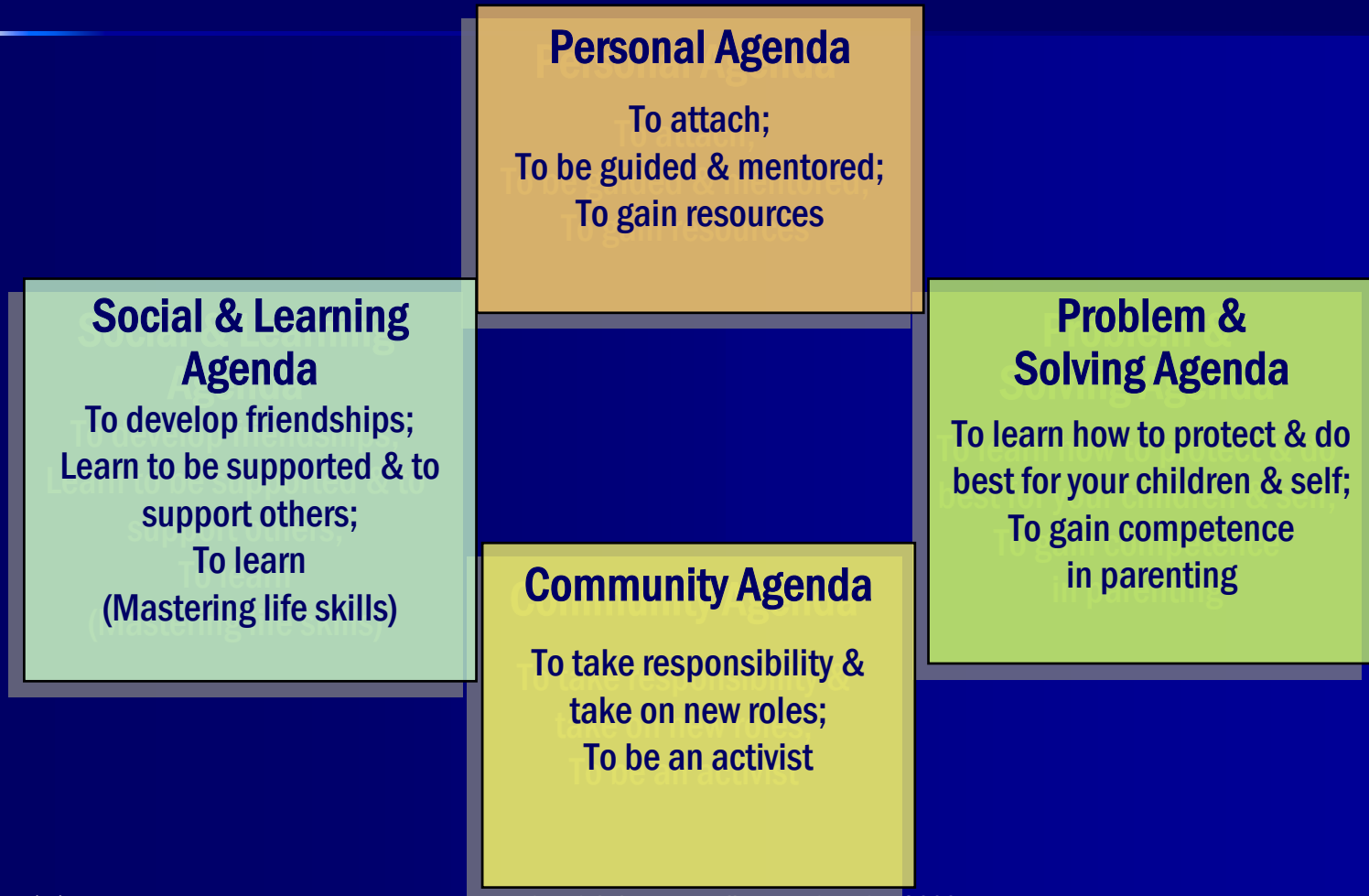
Integrated Family Center Theory of Change & Implementation Guide

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Parent Agendas

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Parent Agenda Interactive Model

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Professional Agenda Interactive Model

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How the Family Center Milieu Contributes to Outcomes for Families in Integrated Family Centers

How the Family Milieu Contributes to Outcomes for Families

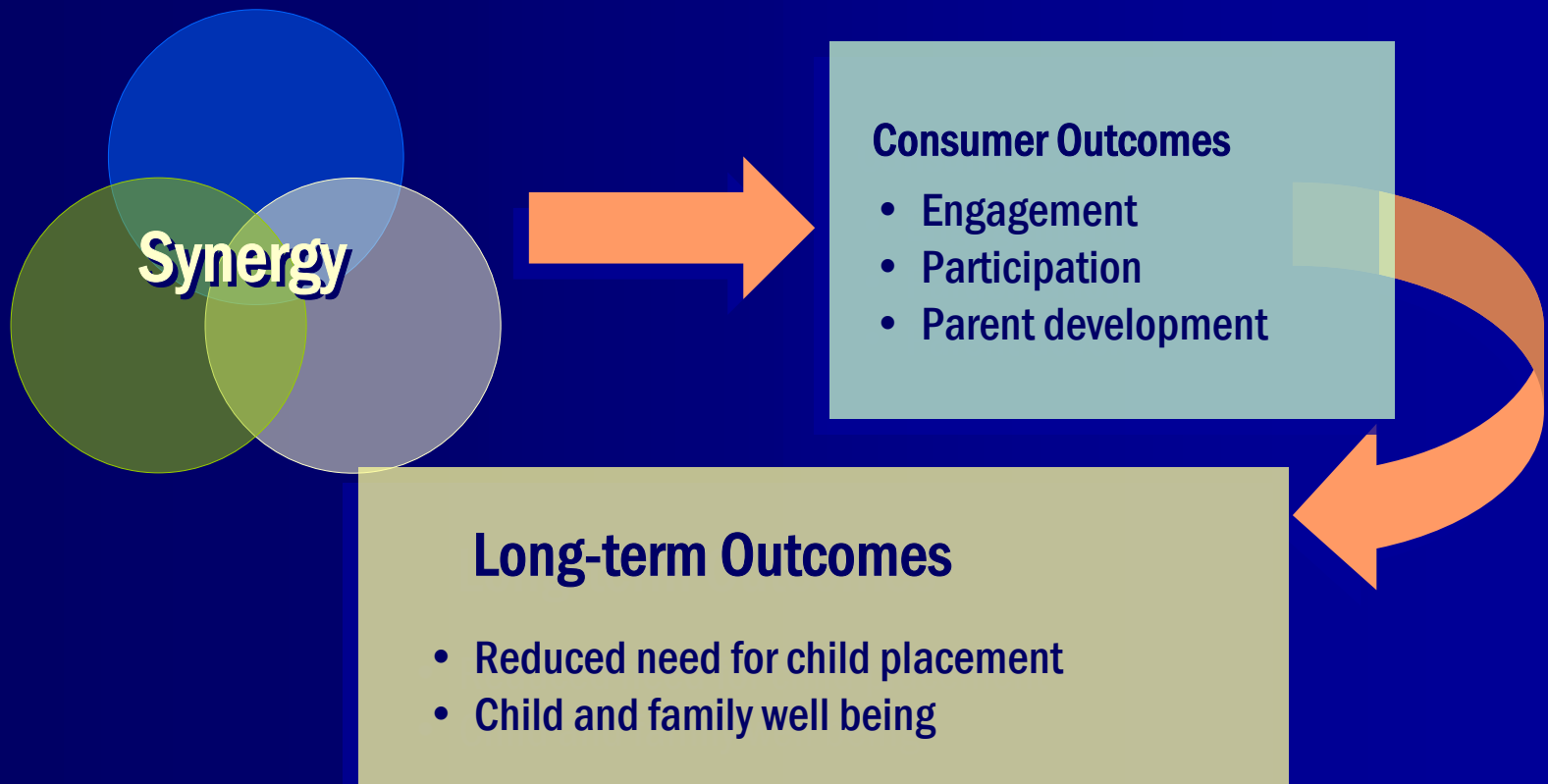
- Belonging to the Family Center (engagement & participation)
- Connection to resources & services
- Strength & quality of the culture of care
- Developmental system that provides protection and nurtures learning through:
 - Capacity of center to help parents work on their different agendas (Personal, Problem Solving, and Social & Community)
 - Capacity of center to support staff in fulfilling their agendas (Capacity Building, Protective, Therapeutic & Social – Mutual Aid, Learning and Community)

There Is a Need to Understand Synergy

- Its pathways and how it works as a fundamental process in FC practice
- Subsequently, we need to measure synergy as a proximal outcome
- And, identify how synergy contributes to other outcomes

Synergy's Relationship to Other Outcomes

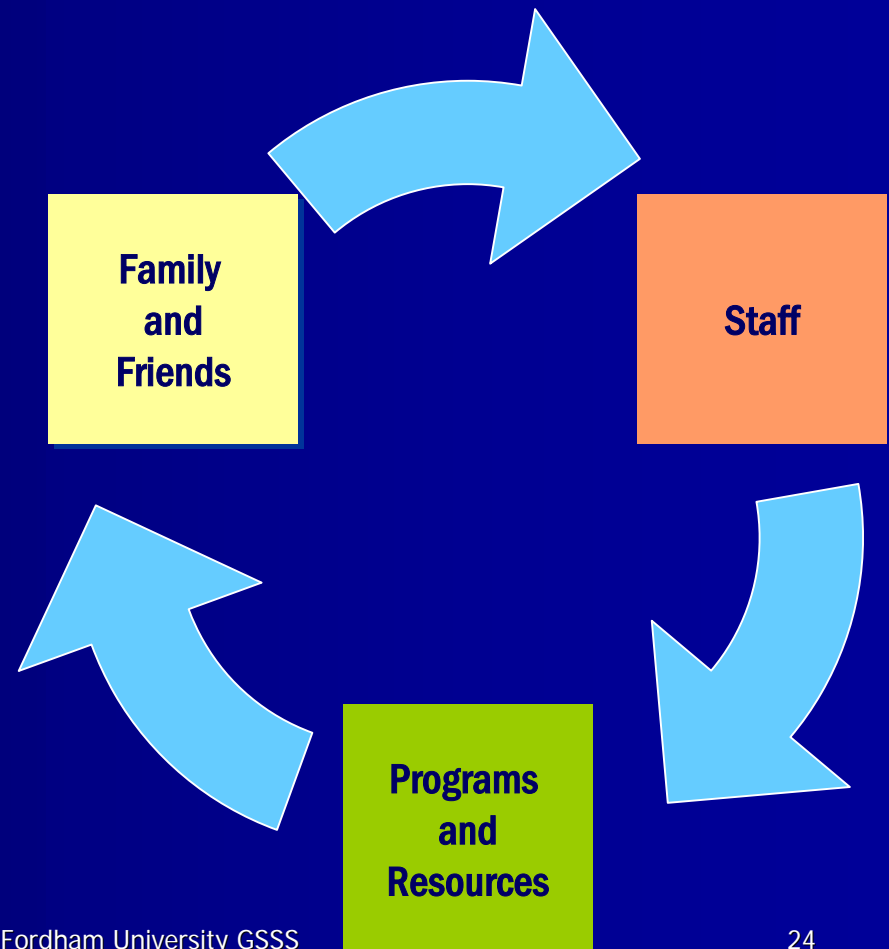
Proximal Outcomes – Steps Along the Way



The Dynamic Processes of Family Center Practice

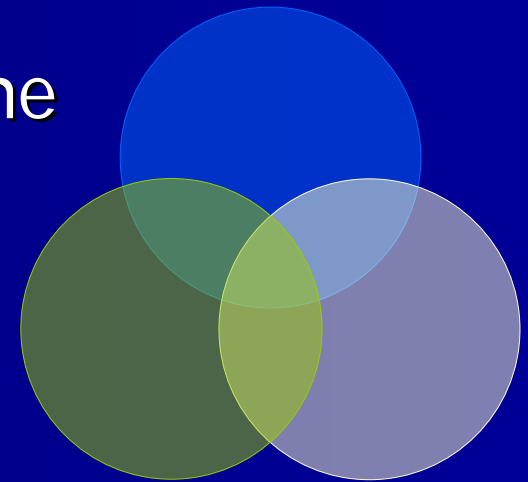
SYNERGY

- Synergy conceptualizes the positive and unique advantage of the family center milieu, its culture of care and developmental system
- This is the process that contributes to the achievement of all staff, center, and parent and child goals



Synergy Is “More than the Sum of the Parts”

- Including multi-pronged interventions that coordinate a variety of reinforcing services, strategies, programs, sectors and systems
- With the power to combine the perspectives, resources and skills of a group of people and organizations



Synergy Is Created by All Involved in the Family Center

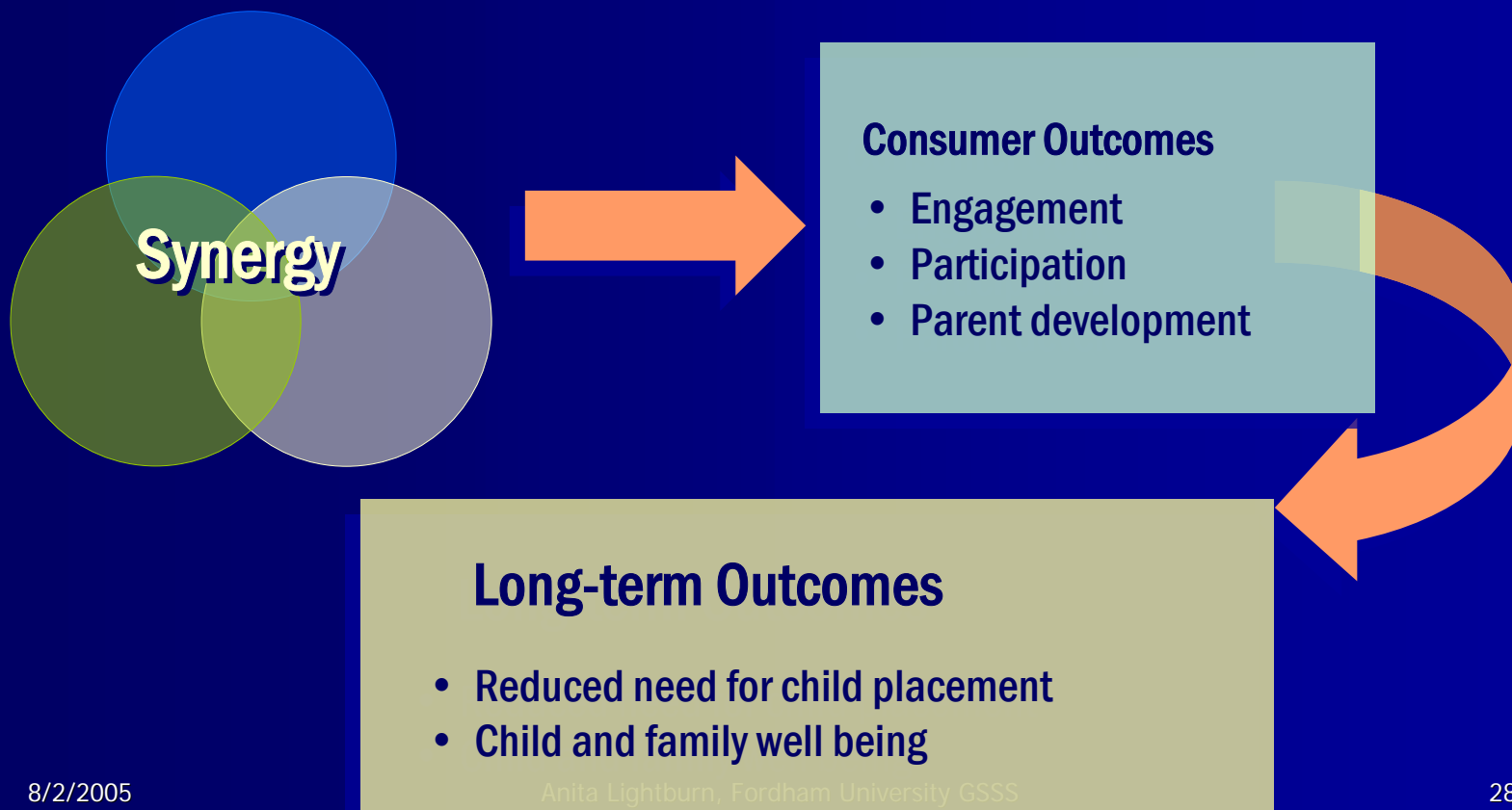
- Through a shared mission
- Creating a culture of care
 - Individualized & family centered
 - FC community focused
 - Respect for diversity
 - Honoring and building capacity
 - Collaborative
 - Accountable (quality care)
 - Creating a safe haven & providing containment
 - Enables continuity of relationships

Synergy Is Crucial to Outcomes

- Synergy is both process and a proximal outcome of the family center – a step along the way
- Synergy mediates other proximal outcomes
- Synergy also mediates long-term outcomes

Synergy Mediates “influencing short and long term outcomes”

Proximal Outcomes – Steps Along the Way



Family Center Milieu – “its synergy” Contributes to Outcomes for Families in Integrated Family Centers

Outcomes For Children and Families

- Child & family safety
- Child & family well-being
- Protection of attachment bonds
(increased reunification)
- Reduced need for child placement

How the Family Center Milieu Contributes to Outcomes

Family Center Milieu Supporting & Developing a “Culture of Care” in the

Family Center Community – enhancing capacity to contain, hold and support growth (through belonging, support, learning, synergy & collaborative evaluation)

How the FC Milieu Contributes to Outcomes for Families

- Belonging to the Family Center (engagement & participation)
- Connection to resources & services
- Strength and quality of the culture of care
- Developmental system that provides protection and nurtures learning through:
 - Capacity of center to help parents work on their different agendas (Personal, Problem Solving, and Social & Community)
 - Capacity of center to support staff in fulfilling their agendas (Capacity Building, Protective, Therapeutic & Social Group Work, Learning and Community)

Lightburn, Ford



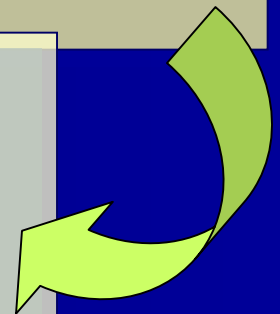
Intermediate Outcomes Steps Along the Way

- Capacity of FC milieu (culture of care) to nurture, protect & contain
 - Staff development
 - Fidelity to principles of practice (e.g. nurture, protect & contain)
 - FC community development
 - Support (resources, linkages)
 - Synergy
- Consumer:
 - Engagement & participation
 - Meeting personal goals
 - Increased support
 - Child & parent development

Outcomes

For Children and Families

- Child & family safety
- Child & family well-being
- Protection of attachment bonds (increased reunification)
- Reduced need for child placement



An Alternative to Out of Home Placement for Children and Parents at Risk and in Distress?

- Recognizing and building the evidence
- Collaborative evaluation
- Telling the story – influencing policy and practice