



THE FAMILY EMPOWERMENT CENTER

A Quarterly Newsletter

IN THIS ISSUE:

Coordinating and Distributing
Remotely

Taking on the Digital Age:
The Chatbot feature

Parenting: Zooming in On our
Virtual Classroom



Written by: Monica Puga

KEEPING DISTANCE & STAYING CONNECTED THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Over the last few months, The Family Empowerment Center has steadily maintained its modes of standards under our new normal. Technology has been the forefront aid to support FEC in continuing to service clients through their journey in case management. Community navigators get creative and use phone contact and video conferencing tools to first set goals with new clients, and use limited in-home time contact for safety checks and document exchanges.

Our case managers make sure families have access to technology to move services along. Case managers support families in concrete ways by filling out applications on three-way calls with providers, or by setting up internet for families. If access is a barrier for families to pick up laptops, navigators coordinate neighborhood school pick up. When doctor appointments become difficult, case managers help with navigating through telehealth for appointments and behavior health intakes. Being able to integrate technology and expectations of doing home visits ensures safety for everyone involved. Our dedication to serving our clients, even under new circumstances, holds steadfast to our values of empowerment and integrity for the families we serve.

Read on to learn how we've integrated technology into our FEC events, workshops, and case management.



***FEC partners with Healthy Americas Foundation to deliver books and PPE to 45 FEC families through a home delivery service. This coordination was possible through the use of our new automated chat feature.**

NEW TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT

BECOMING PROGRAMMERS: With technology on our side, the pandemic has given the team space to explore and create more efficient ways to reach our clientele. Since March, we have been working on an automated chat system to gather past and current families that we serve in one hub. We create automated chatbot flows and edit the software to our program's needs. We offer positive feedback to the bot startup we are working with, which in turn is reshaping its features. Through the automated system, clients can sign up for services FEC offers, ranging from parenting enrollment, books drop offs, to backpack giveaways. We continue to offer the perks to our events through this automated system.

ADRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE / IT SUPPORT: Workshops, parenting sessions, and community linkages are available through the use of online platforms where we can chat, call, meet, and share information with our clients in real time. We are able to host these events virtually, offering our services in a different and engaging way. For clients that are not familiar with technology, the city's decision to move education online has pushed our families to become tech-savvy. Our staff has worked hard in one-on-one sessions with families to walk them through online platforms and features, much like an IT department. Now that our families are using more technology because of our services, the transition into virtual learning has become easier for them as they support their children as they navigate digital learning.

"[Even through this new-normal], we don't miss a beat when it comes to meeting the needs of our clients."

-Doris Acevedo,
Program Director

COORDINATING AND DISTRIBUTING REMOTELY

To continue to give concrete supports, deliveries are being made and local resources are being shared at a rapid rate more than ever. New parents entering the parenting program receive a welcome pack, filled with with goods, local resources, as well as family-driven activities adapted to their family size and ages. Clients have enjoyed this personal touch. "Thanks so much for the bag, I'm so happy and proud of myself for taking these classes, may God Bless you and your family," one client texted back when she found the welcome bag at her door.





COORDINATING AND DISTRIBUTING REMOTELY (CONT'D).



One of the Family Empowerment Center's most popular events has been the Back To School Bash. This year's circumstances have not stopped us from making it a yearly tradition. With a new added twist, this year, FEC has implemented an opt-in automated message for families to sign up for book bag delivery service. FEC has had the support of *Cradles to Crayons* to make this event happen. FEC has also added earphones and PPE to the school bags content to support 100 FEC youth in this new virtual learning mode.

TAKING BOOKS AND TAKING THE CENSUS



families could enjoy the park while reading story pages posted at 6 feet distance from each other. Masks were offered as well as hand sanitizer. For participating in the Storywalk, families took home book kits and crayons, as well as a 3-D Census DIY Count-your-House project to remind them to fill out the Census. This was FEC's way of supporting Census counts as the efforts made to count affect our community programs.

FEC continues to distribute resources in innovative ways. Our staff teamed up with Friends of Harrowgate Park for a social distanced StoryWalk®. In this children's literacy initiative,



Section 5

Updated Date:

☐ Change ☐ No Change

Is the family involved in community groups or organizations?
What community connections do you have?
(schools, churches, recreation centers, social groups, etc.)

Are there any ongoing legal issues involving your family?
(child custody concerns, active Protection from Abuse orders,
immigration status concerns, etc.)

What are some of your strengths when it comes to parenting?

Is there anything upsetting that has happened to your family
that had a severe impact?

What are some areas you want to grow as a caregiver?

Has a member of your family experienced any
of the following:

- ☐ Physical abuse
- ☐ Sexual abuse
- ☐ Neglect
- ☐ Separation from caregivers
- ☐ Grief/ loss
- ☐ Domestic violence
- ☐ Neighborhood violence
- ☐ Fire/ natural disaster
- ☐ Serious physical injury

☐ None

What are some methods you use to reward the children?

What are some methods you use to discipline your children?

Is there anything else you want to discuss?

Observations related to parent-child interaction, parenting
knowledge, history and effects of trauma, and other:

May we contact you for the following reasons:

- To offer services you may be eligible for
- To request feedback on services you have received
- To see how you are doing after receiving services

☐ Texting is OK
☐ Phone calls are OK
☐ Letters are OK

INTRODUCING: OUR NEW INTAKE FORM

The proverb “Necessity is the mother of invention” holds true to our Family Empowerment Center. “Necessity is creating awareness of needs that are in the community,” explains FEC’s Tier I Program Manager Kathryn Baranackie. The Family Empowerment Center adheres to empowering families. That is exactly what the Data and Collection team sought out to do when they re-created the intake form. It is modelled around very thoughtful, open-ended questions that encourage an exchange of information. The form walks families through the following stages: identifying supports they already have, recognizing their own strengths, and discussing areas of growth as caregivers. The open spaces on the form allow families to integrate on paper the fluidity of their family connections and supports, where otherwise check boxes wouldn’t. “Pairing this form with questions about community connections makes the biopsychosocial form a strength-based assessment with parenting support as an emphasis,” Kathryn adds. The families we serve want the best for their children and are constantly striving for it. These are the important components that the biopsychosocial form reflects on through its new format.



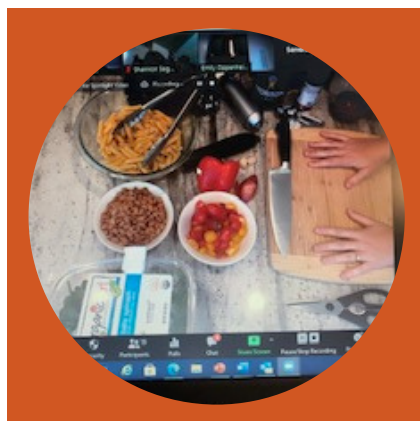
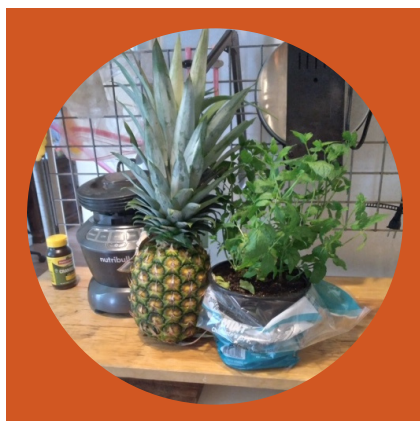
PARENTING: ZOOMING IN ON OUR VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Enhancing the Parenting classes has always been a priority of the program in efforts to provide a robust learning experience that will strengthen parents' knowledge, understanding, and awareness. The now virtual parenting program has taken strides to ensure that, despite the lack of in-person contact, classes stay relevant and applicable.

On the topic of **Communication**, to widen our client's scope of community supports, a self-defense expert from Women in Transition tuned into class to discuss setting boundaries and assertiveness. Parents participated actively and shared their experiences as well as practiced boundary setting techniques on the spot, lead by our guest speaker.

Nutrition Class, from the screen to the kitchen: To Keep things fresh, Congreso partnered up with a Vetri Community Center chef do a step-by-step live demo of a nutritious family meal with fresh ingredients. Participants identified the balanced meal using the MyPlate Method, and were able to sign up for an ingredients delivery to their doors to recreate the recipe at home.

***Clients' recreation at home**



More Guest Speakers Highlights:

To introduce the topic of **Developing Your Own System of Supports** to parents, Congreso invited community partners CUA1 and APM to join us in an online Parent Café. From one-on-ones, to small groups, to whole group, this interactive space for our parents allowed them to interact with each other in a different way and share the challenges and victories of raising a family. The feedback was positive, as parents experienced a change of pace from regular sessions.



In-home Supports:

On the topics of **Sex Education** and **Domestic Violence**, the Parenting program collaborated with our in-house programs at Congreso, Esfuerzo and DV. Our guest speakers did a phenomenal job tackling these topics, with hard facts, honest Q&A sessions, and messages of hope. Our coworkers opened doors of support to our client community. We are most grateful for our diverse partnerships inside and out of Congreso.