

**Better Beginnings, Better Futures
Resident Participation Report**

Mark Pancer & Gary Cameron
Better Beginnings Coordination Unit
Centre for Social Welfare Studies
Wilfrid Laurier University

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1.0 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Resident participation is the cornerstone of any neighbourhood or community development process. From its earliest stages, it was understood that residents of each of the communities selected as Better Beginnings, Better Futures sites would be involved not only as participants in or “recipients” of the various programs, but as decision-makers and planners of those programs, as well. This report documents the nature, extent and impacts of residents’ involvement in the seven non-Native Better Beginnings Sites. The period covered by this report extends from the time the sites were first announced in January of 1991 until September 1992, at which time most sites had planned the majority of the programs that would be offered in their communities, and had already begun to provide some of these programs.

1.1 Introduction

Better Beginnings, Better Futures is a 25-year policy research demonstration project. Its major purpose is to assess the extent to which community-based programs can be effective in preventing emotional, behavioural, physical and cognitive problems in children from economically disadvantaged communities. More specifically, the goals of the project are:

- To reduce the incidence of preventable serious, long-term emotional and behavioural problems in children;
- To promote the optimal emotional, behavioural, social, physical and cognitive development in children at highest risk for such problems;
- To strengthen the ability of communities to respond effectively to the social and economic needs of children and their families.

The project grew out of a number of prevention initiatives introduced by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) since the late 1970s. In 1988, MCSS invited 25 Ontario researchers and program directors to review the literature on primary prevention and to make recommendations for the future direction of prevention programs in the province. The document which resulted from the deliberations of this group (“Better Beginnings, Better Futures: An Integrated Model of Primary Prevention of Emotional and Behavioural Problems”, MCSS, 1989) outlined some of the key elements that characterized the most successful of the programs

in the research literature and around the province. This document was circulated with an invitation to community groups from across the province to submit proposals to become demonstration sites for the Better Beginnings initiative. Funding was provided not only by MCSS, but by the Ministries of Health and Education, as well. A total of 11 sites, 4 of them located on native reserves, were funded beginning in January 1991 to establish programs in their communities.

One of the most important requirements that had to be met by those communities seeking funding was a significant and meaningful involvement of community residents in the planning, development and implementation of prevention programs in their communities. A review of the literature on primary prevention and community development suggests that resident participation is the cornerstone of any community development process. The research literature provides numerous examples of ways in which community residents have been involved in a wide range of programs and activities that help to prevent problems from occurring and promote well-being: they have helped design and build community parks (Francis, 1982); established toy-lending libraries and clothing exchanges for neighbourhood residents (Pancer & Alcalde, 1992); initiated crime prevention programs (Washnis, 1976); organized parent advisory councils in the schools (Comer, 1976, 1980; McClure & Depiano, 1983), lobbied for schools, traffic lights and a whole host of services needed in their neighbourhoods. Residents can be involved at many levels: they can participate in community programs, attend meetings and information sessions, chair committees, organize programs or events in the community, and lobby officials from government or human service agencies (Arnstein, 1969).

The crucial element in residents' participation in such ventures is that it involves the resident as an initiator and a creator of programs and services, not merely as a recipient of such programs (Burke, 1979). This is reflected in Wandersman's (1984) definition of resident participation as:

a process in which individuals take part in decision-making in the institutions, programs, and environments that affect them (p. 339).

It is through the active participation of community members in program decision-making that they develop a sense of control or empowerment (Peattie, 1967). Moreover, the literature is replete with examples of instances in which citizen participation resulted in improved programs and services (e.g., Comer, 1976, 1980; Hodgson, 1984; Pancer and Nelson, 1990) and a better

match between the needs of the community and the kinds of services provided (Iscoe, 1974), as well as instances in which a failure to involve community members has resulted in inferior programs (Wandersman, 1984).

The need for significant and meaningful participation of community residents in Better Beginnings, Better Futures was recognized at the outset. Indeed, the document which outlined the major themes and principles underlying the initiative (MCSS, 1989) stated that:

it is important that members of the community have key responsibilities for decision-making about the design, implementation and evaluation in community-based primary prevention programs (p. 70).

This report begins to tell the story of resident participation in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project. Future reports will continue this story over the duration of the project.

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In general, the research contained in this report utilized a qualitative or naturalistic approach, organized within a multiple-case study framework (Yin, 1988). A qualitative approach involves the collection of data by means of direct observation, interviews (either individual or group) and the examination of written documents (Patton, 1990). The individual who was assigned primary responsibility for data-gathering at each of the seven sites was the Site Researcher. The Site Researcher was often assisted in this task by a Site Liaison, who provided a link between the site and the Core Research Team, and by one or more research assistants.

Field Notes

The major source of information was the set of field notes compiled at each of the seven Better Beginnings, Better Futures sites. These notes consisted of a semi-verbatim account (i.e., using participants' own words) of what had transpired during meetings of the site's main decision-making group, summary notes of what had gone on at other meetings and events (e.g., visits to the site by government representatives), and summaries of major documents such as proposals, minutes of meetings and interviews. The field notes also contained analytic comments which summarized the researcher's personal impressions and reflections about meetings, discussions and documents.

The field notes gathered at each site were entered into a computer database via “The Ethnograph” software package (Seidel, Kjolseth & Seymour, 1988). This package allows for the coding of fieldnotes into major categories (e. g. resident involvement, government relations), and the quick extraction of all notes relevant to particular codes or topics. The portion of the notes which had been coded under the topic of resident involvement formed the major source of information utilized in compiling this report.

Interviews

A number of the aspects of resident participation which were of interest were often not available from the information contained in the field notes. For example, one issue of concern with regard to resident participation was what had motivated residents to get involved in Better Beginnings in the first place. This was not often a topic discussed at meetings, and so it was necessary to ask residents about such issues such as these in either an individual or group interview, in order to supplement the information contained in the field notes.

In most of the sites, both individual and group interviews were conducted. These interviews used an interview guide approach (Patton, 1990), in which a set of topics or subject areas was provided for the researchers to cover in the interview, but the interviewers were free to “explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate that particular subject” (Patton, 1990, p. 283). The guide for the individual interview (see Appendix 1) included questions concerning the nature and amount of the respondent’s involvement in the project, her/his motivation to participate, perceived barriers to participation, structures that had been established to encourage participation at the site, outcomes of participation, and the relationship between residents, staff and service providers. The group interview (see Appendix 1) utilized a focus-group format, and covered many of the same subjects included in the individual interviews: the nature and amount of resident participation in the project; people’s motivation for participating; barriers to participation; how participation of residents has benefitted the project, the community and the residents themselves; negative outcomes that residents had experienced; and the relationship of residents, staff and agency personnel involved in the project. These individual and group

interviews were often supplemented by more informal interviews and conversations that the researcher had with those involved at the site.

Report Framework

In generating their individual Site Reports, the Site Researchers had agreed to follow a report framework which had been developed collaboratively by themselves and the Core Research Team (see Appendix 1 for the framework). This report framework ensured that a core of relevant information was gathered and reported in all the sites in a consistent format, and allowed for efficient collecting of information from the individual Site Reports in generating this cross-site report. The report framework contained questions concerning the nature and amount of resident participation, residents' motivation to participate, barriers to participation, resident participation and program development, outcomes of participation, structures for participation, and resident/staff/ service provider interaction. For example, the section on outcomes of participation included questions such as "how have residents changed as a result of their participation?" and "have there been any negative impacts of resident participation on either the individuals involved, or on the community?" In writing their individual Site Reports, Site Researchers were asked to ensure they had answered all the questions in the framework. An emphasis was placed on including as much detailed description and direct quotes as possible. Site Researchers were also encouraged to include their own analysis and interpretation, ensuring, however, that there was a clear distinction between description and analysis.

3.0 WHO IS A RESIDENT?

In the beginning, when the goal of having high levels of local resident involvement was established, it is unlikely that many people foresaw a difficulty in deciding who should be considered a community resident. However, it soon became clear that many residents involved in Better Beginnings, Better Futures not only lived in the community, but also worked as service providers in the community. This became further complicated when residents were hired to staff the various Better Beginnings, Better Futures projects. In addition, residents involved in program

activities also played a part in designing those activities. These multiple types of involvement often led to confusion in deciding who legitimately could represent the community perspective:

It was suggested that there be eight community representatives and four agency representatives to sit on the Steering Committee... it was agreed two of the eight residents could be staff provided they lived in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures neighbourhoods. (Site 2)

At the end of September 1992, one of the five neighbourhood residents on the Management Board was a staff person; two other neighbourhood board members became staff since then. (Site 3)

In September, 1992, there were 3 fairly consistently participating residents on the Steering Committee, along with two service providers who were also area residents. (Site 4)

The members of the working groups who currently sit on the (Steering Committee) are not necessarily volunteer residents, but more often employees of the project. (Site 6)

The programs themselves provide structures for participation. They cultivate the involvement of residents as volunteers to help in the development and beginnings of programs and as participants to enjoy their benefits. (Site 2)

The exclusion of program participation in a report on resident participation assumes that there is a clearly understood and defined line between those who are program participants and those who are volunteers. However, this distinction is less clear in this project... Program participants are not just receivers of services... They are involved, they are consulted about program issues, and many participate in other areas. An example of this occurred at a family support team meeting during which program ideas were being discussed:

Respondent 1: Where did all these ideas for programs come from? Did you think of them or where they from parents?

Respondent 2: A lot came from the moms who came to the Moms and Tots. (Site 3)

This community development approach grew from residents coming into the house and doing what they did and knew to be best - talking to others, supporting, encouraging, listening. It was from their one-to-one contact... that a vision evolved of community development based on trust through face-to-face interaction between all Better Beginnings staff and other residents. (Site 2)

Some of the members on the (Steering Committee) both live in the project site and work with children and families in the project site. People are allowed to decide whether or not they will be community representatives or agency representatives. (Site 5)

From the agencies participating in the project, four of the eight more regular representatives live or work within the site. (Site 6)

3.1 Discussion

In order to describe resident involvement at the Better Beginnings, Better Futures demonstration sites, it will be useful to clearly define the various types of resident involvement with the projects:

- (1) **Volunteer Residents:** These are local community residents who are not paid as project staff or employed by a service organization involved in the project.
- (2) **Service Provider/Residents:** These are local community residents who are employed by a service organization involved in the project. They may be people who moved into the community because of their job or people residing in the community prior to their employment.
- (3) **Staff/Residents:** These are local community residents who are employed by the Better Beginnings project. They are usually, but not always, people who lived in the community prior to being hired by the project.

Residents in all three categories have had a major impact on project development at the seven sites. Subsequent sections will discuss these types of participation in more detail. What is important to note here is that restricting the idea of community involvement to volunteer residents participating in setting policies and making major decisions for the demonstration sites will exclude many of the actual ways residents influence the projects. For example, residents participate:

- as members of Boards of Directors/Steering Committees,
- as members of Board/Steering Committee sub-committees,
- as members of program development work groups,
- as staff of the demonstration sites,
- as volunteers in program/service delivery or day-to-day project administration,
- as program/service participants who also contribute to program definition and development,

- by attending public consultation meetings.

Any understanding about how residents are involved or should be involved in the projects must be able to accommodate these different kinds of participation. These are all ways that community residents have and will continue to exert their influence over the projects. It is not clear that any one way of participating is more important or more desirable than another. Involving significant numbers of community residents is proving to be neither a simple nor a straight-forward undertaking. There is much that remains to be learned.

4.0 STRUCTURES FOR RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

How many different residents should be involved in managing each primary prevention demonstration site? What structures facilitate resident involvement in project planning and decision-making? While a higher number of involved community residents is not an adequate indicator of the quality of community involvement by itself, there are several reasons why an examination of the numbers of residents involved at each site is important. First, it seems that there needs to be a minimum number of residents involved in order for them to have a significant impact on a project and to feel at home participating. Second, the ratio of professionals/staff to residents involved on various decision-making structures is important. When residents are substantially outnumbered, their active participation may be more difficult to sustain. Finally, there is a great deal of work in developing a primary prevention project, and multiple work groups and committees are required. If a few residents are not to be asked to do too much, and if residents are to have their say in most major decisions, there have to be enough of them to share the responsibilities:

In the proposal development process, residents averaged 11 hours of work per person per month; in the fall of 1992, they averaged 6 hours. It is not the amount of work that has decreased; rather, more neighbourhood leaders have shared the work (22 were regular participants in the fall of 1991 and 38 in the fall of 1992). (Site 3)

Residents participated on boards/steering committees, on smaller working groups, and as volunteers in program activities. Table 1 provides an overview of the numbers of community

residents participating formally on demonstration site structures. The table describes the total number of different residents active as volunteers at each site and the numbers participating on the board of directors/steering committee, on board/steering committee sub-committees and on program development groups. Information is also provided on the numbers of residents employed at each demonstration site. The discussion in this section focuses on the numbers of residents involved. Subsequent sections will examine the nature of their involvement and factors impeding and facilitating their participation.

When we look at the total number of volunteer residents active at each site, four groupings of sites become apparent. Sites three, five and seven all report involving between 30 and 40 residents as active volunteers in their projects. This level of resident involvement reportedly allows residents to volunteer in significant numbers on all, or most, decision-making structures and, as will be discussed later, to have an important impact on basic policies and program/service development. Sites one and two report having about 8 to 10 active resident volunteers. This level of involvement may make it more difficult to have the desired level of resident participation on important sub-committees and working groups and, as shall be discussed later, has led to a dependence on a small core group of resident volunteers to do many things. Site four reports few residents involved as volunteers on their key planning and decision-making structures:

In fact, only 1-3 residents participated in the formal structures.

Besides an excessive reliance on a few residents, the influence of volunteer residents on project and program development at this site has reportedly been minimal. The picture at site six is more complex. While about 12 to 15 residents were active as volunteers, these people were very unevenly distributed across various groupings. Fewer than 1 in 5 people on the Board/Steering Committee were volunteer residents:

In terms of physical presence, the role of volunteer representation has never been very strong with the (Steering Committee)... Only a few parents became involved... and have played an essential role. Their number at meetings has varied from 4 to 5.

On three other committees/working groups volunteer residents were also outnumbered by 2 or 3 to 1. However, on the two remaining committees/working groups, two times as many volunteer residents as other participants attended regularly. In addition, much higher proportions of

residents participated and voted on the Steering Committee, on sub-committees and on program working groups as project employees and as representatives of other service organizations than at any other site.

Boards of Directors/Steering Committee Membership

Each of the demonstration sites has formed a central decision-making Board of Directors or Steering Committee. This central grouping has played a major role in project development to date at each site and there would be general agreement that good levels of resident participation are important at this level. Although each site employs a different name to identify this central decision-making body (e.g., Action Committee, Association, Board of Directors, etc.), we will use the term steering committee where referring to this body. The patterns of participation of residents on these steering committees varied substantially across the seven sites. Site five also was unique in having twice as many volunteer residents (12) as service providers/professionals (6) on its Steering Committee. Site five was the only site with a specific objective of having more volunteer residents than professionals on all major committees and working groups. Sites three (5 volunteer residents:7 professionals) and seven (6 volunteer residents:6 professionals) were the only other sites with equal or almost equal numbers of volunteer residents and professionals on this central decision-making group. Sites one (4 volunteer residents:7 professionals), two (7 volunteer residents: 11 professionals and staff), four (3 volunteer residents:6 professionals) and six (3 volunteer residents: 6 professionals:6 staff) all had half as many, or fewer, residents as professionals. When project staff participating in steering committee meetings also are considered, the minority status of volunteer residents at these meetings is even more evident.

Sites one, two, three, four and five all had a formal or informal objective of having about 50% of the steering committee being volunteer residents. Site six wanted to have equal numbers of volunteer residents, service providers and project staff on the Steering Committee. As mentioned, site five envisioned having twice as many volunteer residents as service providers voting on its Steering Committee. As of September, 1992, only sites three, five and seven managed to attain the volunteer resident participation goals set for themselves. However, sites one and two have made notable progress in involving more residents since the projects were

formally funded in January, 1991. Sites four and six remained at the low levels noted in their Proposal Development Reports (Cameron, Pancer, McKenzie-Mohr and Cooper, 1993).

Subcommittee Membership

Sites two, three, five and seven report being able to have at least 50% residents on their major steering committee sub-committees. Site seven was unique in having its major program committees composed entirely of residents who received staff support to do their work. Site five had a guideline of 2 residents to 1 professional on its program development groups and, while in fact this objective was not always satisfied, maintained substantial levels of resident involvement on these groups:

It has been difficult to maintain this (2:1) structure on the sub-committees... become concerned that the sub-committees would not be able to get any work done if this ratio always had to be adhered to... there was agreement that the sub-committees would strive for this kind of membership but should not be prohibited from working if they did not have this ratio.

Program Development Groups

Sites one and three reported at least 50% residents participating on their program development groups. Site six reported higher levels of resident involvement in the program development groups than on its Steering Committee or its sub-committees. However, these residents were often the employees of other service - providing organizations in the community or project staff. Site two reported slightly fewer residents than professionals on its program development groups, while only Site Four had mostly non-resident professionals and staff.

Staff

Finally, hiring community residents as project staff has become a major vehicle for resident influence over project development at the demonstration sites. Indeed, at some sites (four and six), there are more residents involved as staff than as volunteers and, at sites one and two, there are about as many residents who are staff as volunteers. Sites three and seven also have substantial numbers of residents employed in the project, but this is offset by the higher numbers of volunteer residents involved. With these large (and increasing) numbers of residents as project

employees, it is evident that employment will be a powerful way in which local community residents will influence the development of the projects. However, as will be discussed in detail in a separate section of this report, employing residents also has brought a number of unanticipated changes to the demonstration sites.

4.1 Discussion

This information about the levels of formal resident participation in the seven demonstration sites raises questions about what reasonable expectations are for community involvement. These projects will develop many different decision-making and working groups over time. Is it necessary for community residents to be involved in equal numbers in all groups or is it sufficient for residents to be well-represented in a few key places? To be full participants in all major working groups may require that upwards of 30 to 40 residents be active in the project, if very heavy demands are not to be made on a few residents. In some of these demonstration sites, it may prove very difficult to create this level of resident involvement. It might make more sense in some situations to focus, at least initially, on supporting meaningful resident involvement on the steering committee and one or two key working groups.

In addition, over time it may prove difficult to interest residents in participating in all aspects of building and managing the projects. Maintaining high levels of volunteer involvement in administration and policy development has proved to be a difficult challenge for voluntary organizations in many different settings. There are limits on what people can contribute as volunteers. Also, residents need alternative ways to become involved. Not all residents are able to serve right away on boards and in positions of giving their opinion. It takes time for some residents to gain confidence and self-esteem. Therefore, there needs to be a number of ways residents can be involved and feel comfortable.

Perhaps it would be timely to begin to think about those aspects of the prevention projects where resident influence would be the most critical and about those things that residents would have the greatest interest in doing or where their unique life experiences would make the greatest contributions. One of the pressures that personnel at the demonstration sites work under is not knowing what would be reasonable to expect in terms of residents becoming active in the projects.

It may now be possible to discuss the desired levels of resident participation and the places where it is most important for resident participation to be strongly supported.

Even the highest levels of volunteer involvement noted for these sites (30 to 40 active volunteer residents) represent only a very small proportion of the community residents affected by the prevention programs:

The (Junior Kindergarten) registration, I think there were 150 kids that registered and we met everyone of (the parents) at the registration and how many of them have come out... one or two.

These participants are only a fraction of those who live in the community and they are involved in multiple activities within the project. These active participants have become the voice for the community.

Under the most optimistic of scenarios, only a tiny percent of eligible residents can be involved on project development and management structures. This raises the questions about who the involved residents represent (see the discussion in a subsequent section) and how they should be chosen. As the projects become more established and influential in their neighbourhoods, there may be more residents wanting to represent their community than there are positions available. At that point, more formal selection/election procedures may be required. To date, most sites have emphasized keeping their discussion and decision-making processes open to all residents. In many cases, sites have been struggling to maintain the involvement of any resident who shows interest in participating.

None of the sites has as yet adopted procedures commonly used in organizations to secure volunteer involvement - for example, formal memberships in the organization, annual meetings, recruiting procedures and slates of candidates, formal elections and terms of office, by-laws governing these procedures, and so on. Sites have yet to clearly articulate methods for selecting members on their governance and program development structures. Perhaps it will not be accepted by many that these types of formal procedures are desirable or necessary things to do. Yet, if the projects become established organizations in their community, the issues of how representatives are chosen and what are their responsibilities and rights will have to be clarified.

It is also very clear that hiring by the demonstration sites will be a major way of supporting resident participation. Indeed, if experience in other voluntary service organizations is indicative,

residents as staff (depending on the numbers hired and the positions they occupy) will exercise greater influence over key aspects of the demonstration projects than they could have as volunteer participants. This means that employing residents needs to be understood as a legitimate way in which residents can be involved in the primary prevention projects.

However, as shall be discussed in a separate section of this report, hiring residents has raised many unanticipated issues in terms of their relations with other volunteer residents, professionals and non-resident project staff and whether resident staff can continue to properly represent their neighbourhoods on boards/steering committees, sub-committees and program development groups. What happens when a volunteer becomes an employee? What does she/he lose and gain? How does what she/he can contribute to the project change? These are questions that are timely at many sites. As of September, 1992, some residents had dual status as employees and as voting members of a board/steering committee or sub-group. For example, site six had a management model which allowed staff, volunteer residents and service providers to have equal voting status on the Board/Steering Committee. While quite different decisions can be made about the wisdom of allowing multiple roles for a resident (e.g., board member, group member, staff, program participant), this is an area where greater site-by-site clarity will be required as the project unfolds.

TABLE 1 Number of Community Residents Participating in Better Beginnings, Better Futures Projects as of August 31, 1992¹

SITE	Board of Directors/ Steering Committee	Board/Steering Committee Sub-Committees	Program Development Groups	Staff	Total Number of Different People Active as Volunteers
SITE ONE	4 volunteer residents 7 professionals 4 staff non-voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community Development 3 volunteer residents 3 professionals ● Personnel 1 volunteer resident ● Finance 1 volunteer resident ● Research 3 volunteer residents 7 professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nutrition 3 volunteer residents 1 professional ● Inschool 3 volunteer residents 1 professional 	1 resident FTE ² - Several Part-time 4 non-resident FTE	9 different volunteer residents active in organizational structures
SITE TWO	6-8 volunteer residents 10-12 professionals and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transport 4 volunteer residents 2 professionals ● Objectives 4 volunteer residents 2 professionals ● Research 2-4 volunteer residents 2-3 professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family Support 1-3 volunteer residents 5-6 professionals ● Inhome 2-3 volunteer residents 4 professionals ● Health 2 volunteer residents 3 professionals 	8 residents 8 non-residents	4-6 active core of volunteer residents at meetings 9 volunteer residents in total on six different working groups

¹The numbers provided for the sites are averages or reasonable estimates. In some instances, they are based on averages over several meetings or in others are an approximation of typical numbers of residents involved based on the Site Reports.

²Full Time Equivalent

SITE	Board of Directors/ Steering Committee	Board/Steering Committee Sub-Committees	Program Development Groups	Staff	Total Number of Different People Active as Volunteers
SITE THREE	4 volunteer residents 1 staff/resident voting 7 professionals 1 staff non-voting	40%-60% residents on 7 to 9 committees	50% residents on groups also a Residents-Only Group with 5-10 sub-committees (80%-100% volunteer residents)	3 residents FTE 1 resident part-time 3 residents FTE to be hired in Fall 1992	38 regular volunteer resident participants in Fall 1992 up from 22 in Fall 1991 (includes Residents-Only Group)
SITE FOUR	3 volunteer residents 4 professionals 2 professionals/residents 1 staff non-voting 1 staff notetaker non-voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personnel ● Finance 2 volunteer residents 4 professionals 1 staff voting 1 staff/resident voting ● Race Relations ● Research 1 volunteer resident 5 professionals 2 professionals/residents 3 staff voting 1 staff/resident voting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Early Childhood 2 volunteer residents 9 professionals 2 staff voting ● Child Care 1 volunteer resident 3-5 professionals ● Community Support 1 volunteer resident 3 professionals 1 staff voting 3-7 in Residents-Only Group 	5 residents FTE 1 resident part-time 4 FTE to be hired (will be residents)	3 volunteer residents active in meetings 4-7 participate in Residents-Only Group

SITE	Board of Directors/ Steering Committee	Board/Steering Committee Sub-Committees	Program Development Groups	Staff	Total Number of Different People Active as Volunteers
SITE FIVE	12 volunteer residents 6 professionals 3-4 volunteer resident observers 1 staff/resident non- voting	2 volunteer residents/ one professional ratio as guideline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hiring 4 volunteer residents 1 professional 1 professional/resident <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rules 5 volunteer residents 2 professionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finance 1 volunteer resident 3 professionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Special Events - changing membership 1 staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Site 2 volunteer residents 1 professional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research 6 volunteer residents 3 professionals	2 volunteer residents/ one professional ratio as guideline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prenatal 5 volunteer residents 5 professionals 4 professionals/reside nts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child Care 1 volunteer resident 9 professionals 4 professionals/ residents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family Support 7 volunteer residents 1 professional 1 professional /resident	1 resident FTE	20-30 volunteer residents active in meetings

SITE	Board of Directors/ Steering Committee	Board/Steering Committee Sub-Committees	Program Development Groups	Staff	Total Number of Different People Active as Volunteers
SITE SIX	4 volunteer residents 5 professionals 2 professionals/ residents 5-6 staff voting 5 staff/residents voting 2-3 staff (residents and non-residents) attend sometimes voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research 2 volunteers residents 3-4 staff/residents 4 staff/non-residents 1 professional ● Executive Committee 1 volunteer resident 2 staff/residents 1 staff/non-resident 1 professional ● Advisory Committee 1 volunteer resident 11 professionals 3 professionals/residents 3 staff/residents 2 staff/non-residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Population Group 1 3 volunteer residents 3-4 staff/residents 1 staff/non-resident 1 professional/ resident ● Population Group 2 5 volunteer residents 1 staff/non-resident 1 professional ● Population Group 3 10 volunteer residents 2 staff/residents 2 professionals ● Service Providers 5 professionals 2 professionals/ residents 	5 residents FTE 3 non- residents FTE 12 residents part-time 1 non-resident part-time	3-4 volunteer residents active on Steering Committee 12-15 volunteer residents active in meetings

SITE	Board of Directors/ Steering Committee	Board/Steering Committee Sub-Committees	Program Development Groups	Staff	Total Number of Different People Active as Volunteers
SITE SEVEN	6 volunteer residents 6 professionals 2 staff non-voting	usually 50% or more volunteer residents on numerous ad hoc committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parents Committee 13 volunteer residents 1 staff non-voting ● Nutrition 8 volunteer residents 1 staff non-voting ● Education 10 volunteer residents 1 staff/resident non-voting ● Daycare 13 volunteer residents 1 staff non-voting ● Health 3 volunteer residents 1 staff non-voting 	4 residents FTE 11 residents part-time 2 non-resident FTE	35-40 volunteer residents active in meetings

Program development groups appear to be places where substantial numbers of residents are involved in the demonstration projects (see sites one, two, three, five, six and seven). It may be that the area of program development is the one in which residents are most interested or where they are seen as having the most to contribute. It also seems that the distinction between participating in a program and building that program may not be very clear. This may be particularly true for the community development program components and for program activities that bring participants together into groups. Here, besides participating in activities, they are likely to be involved in deciding what the program should become over time. In addition, programs are seen as a way of reaching out to residents and providing them with the necessary experiences to be able to participate in other ways in the project.

It seems that whatever forms of resident involvement eventually take hold in the demonstration projects, they are going to have to be able to accommodate several important ways of participating - in project governance, in program development, as program participants, and as staff. It will take some time before a viable balance between these elements is achieved at each site.

5.0 WHO WAS INVOLVED?

At this stage in their development, the demonstration sites reported concerns about whether they were adequately representing the different sub-groupings in their communities. The Site Reports indicated that overwhelmingly, residents volunteering or being employed in the project were women. Only in the fall of 1992 did a few sites report a modest increase in the number of male participants:

6 of the 33 who've attended meetings are men (5 of these became involved in the last 6 months)... The reason that men have begun to attend meetings seems related to the fact that there are increasingly more jobs that appeal to men; for example, maintenance, grass cutting, barbecuing, helping with sports for teens. (Site 2)

Of the three residents on the Steering Committee, all are women, all are white, one is a single mom. (Site 4)

Almost exclusively the involved parents are mothers (only one man is active with the project), who tend not to work outside the house or who work evening or

nightshifts... in the past few months several parents (mothers) from a neighbouring school have also become involved with the project. (Site 1)

Only two men have been consistently and actively involved since the beginning of the project... (They) participate in different activities than women. (Site 3)

Few male volunteers, few male employees (less than 15%). (Site 6)

Several sites serving mixed income areas indicated that higher income families were not participating in the projects. Finally, some sites working in dispersed or multiple neighbourhood communities reported that the residents closer to their offices or program centres were participating more frequently than the people in more distant areas:

Residents present often come from a very limited geographical area. Because the schools and the centres that were developed... were close to one another, the residents who were most involved... lived in the areas surrounding the two centres or whose children attended the schools with programs. (Site 6)

It's mostly the people who come here (the school) with their children, more than it is residents. (Site 1)

23 of 33 attending meetings came from 1 of the 3 target areas (the project house is in this area). (Site 2)

Many are representatives of two public housing projects in the neighbourhood. The remaining participants are from areas near the public housing complexes... As the numbers ... increased there has been an increase in participation from those outside the two public housing complexes. These participants, however, are still in a minority. (Site 3)

Few community leaders, few business people. (Site 6)

No site with substantial ethnic, cultural or linguistic minorities in its community reported much success at involving members of these groups in decision-making. As shall be discussed, crossing ethnic or cultural barriers and, in particular, language barriers has proved to be very problematic for these projects:

Representation from recent immigrants and those whose first language is not English is also low. The number of program participants in 'English as a Second Language' classes... has increased, but few of these people have become directly involved in the project. (Site 3)

No representatives from the S.E. Asian or black communities ... some Chinese/Vietnamese/Blacks at special events... (Site 4)

(Language group) down due to conflict with staff in April 1992... multicultural involvement is almost non-existent... some Latin Americans... (Site 6)

...individuals of specific ethnocultural groups were not represented in the project... (Site 1)

5.1 Discussion

There were concerns expressed about how representative of the community the group of residents participating in each demonstration project was. To date, almost all active participants were women and most were from neighbourhoods close to the project sites or with children in the schools hosting the programs. There was also little success reported in involving residents from minority groups, particularly those from non-English speaking communities.

The pattern of mostly women volunteering in community development projects in low-income neighbourhoods is not uncommon particularly with regard to projects for young children, since mothers tend to play the key role in linkages to schools and agencies during this period. What is not clear at this point is whether there is reason to be concerned. The lack of male volunteers and the smaller numbers of volunteers from more distant parts of the community may be resolved as the recruitment processes in the demonstration project become better established over time. It appears as if the sites have stressed allowing every resident who wished to do so to participate in the process. The early concerns were more about having adequate numbers of residents participating than with having a particular mix of residents involved. The demonstration sites have not yet developed policies about appropriate male-female, neighbourhood, and ethnic balances for their governance structures and staff. When desired balances become clearer at each site, it would be reasonable to expect that some of these concerns will be addressed more effectively. However, the issue of getting adequate numbers of residents involved may continue to receive priority attention at those sites where this is still a concern.

The challenge of involving different ethnic groups, particularly where communication in the projects' common language of work is problematic, does seem to be very difficult. As of September, 1992, none of the seven demonstration sites included in this report seemed to have

identified clear strategies to involve minorities. For example, at a community meeting where about 15 non-English speaking residents came as a group, the attempts of the few who could speak English to translate for the others throughout the meeting made the proceedings more complex and frustrating for many participants. The Site Reports indicated that both integrating different language groups into the same structures and holding language-specific group meetings are being tried. Some sites reported that it was easier to achieve ethnic/linguistic balance among project staff than among volunteer resident participants. It also may be that having a more diverse staff complement will create new ways to reach out to minority communities in the future. Given the ethnic/linguistic diversity of some of the host communities for the demonstration projects, involving minorities will likely continue to receive attention and new participation models are likely to evolve over the next year or so.

6.0 MOTIVATION TO PARTICIPATE

Creating effective ways to involve community residents in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures projects can benefit from a better understanding of why residents come in the first place and why they stay. Understanding residents' motives for participating provides clues about the kinds of opportunities that should be created as well as the aspects of project development that may be less immediately attractive to many residents. It also helps to recognize that residents become involved for many different reasons and not all residents are searching for the same kinds of experiences. The following discussion of residents' motivation to participate in the project indicates a wide range of factors that motivated residents to get involved in Better Beginnings.

Enhancing the Lives of Their Children

Many things motivated parents to participate in Better Beginnings, Better Futures. The most important of these was a desire to enhance the lives of their children, and to work for a better future for them:

I'm involved because of the people getting together and pulling towards the kids' future in life.

[I became involved] because I want to help my children. Everything I can do for them, I do ...

[Concern for their children's future] is the fundamental reason why several parents have become involved in the project.

This (project) is important to me because of my children... I don't think there is enough for children in this area.

Many parents were simply looking for something for their children to do that would allow them to meet other children and have fun. As one service provider stated:

I think some people wanted to come out and see the Family Resource Centre to get a chance to meet other parents and to provide an opportunity for their kids to play with other children... some are in high rise apartments and don't have the opportunity.

The parents involved in Better Beginnings, Better Futures programs expressed similar hopes:

This (project) is for families... something I can take my kids to and is fun... they get taken care of... if I can get some information and learn something, GREAT!

[I want] to get my daughter to play with other children and get out and meet people... she's an only child and I want her to meet people before she goes to school.

[I would like] to have more fun for the children.

Children can have different kinds of games and activities.

The children can interact with other children.

They have good programs to get kids out of the house.

Many parents also saw Better Beginnings, Better Futures as a way to help their children learn something or improve themselves, and perhaps enhance their readiness for school:

With anything for the children, it interests me!... If it is something that can help the child improve himself ...

[Better Beginnings, Better Futures can help] in finding good ways to educate children.

[Parents] see it as readiness for school.

Some parents also looked forward to the opportunity of participating with their children in project activities and events. One parent indicated that her participation in the project "gives me a sense of involvement even more with my own children".

Making the Community a Better Place to Live

Another factor which motivated many community residents to get involved was their desire to improve their communities:

This was a chance to do something within the neighbourhood I was living in, and to try and make it a better place than it was.

So we can get something positive going in the community.

To better ourselves... to make the community a nice place to be in.

A large majority of residents feel that because it is their community, they are ready to take part in any activity whose goal is to improve the living conditions in the community.

They want to do things that are going to be better for our kids...and the secondary concern is 'how do we make the community better'...

For many, improving the community as a whole was one of the ways in which Better Beginnings, Better Futures could improve the lives of children. One of the Site Reports described residents as being concerned with "improving their neighbourhood and making it safer for their children". Another indicated that residents had a "strong desire to see change in the community for young parents and young children." One of the Site Reports suggested that a key feature of Better Beginnings, Better Futures was the fact that it allowed residents "to have more control over what happens in their neighbourhoods."

Evidence for the desire to improve the neighbourhood in one of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures communities was seen in the high levels of participation in activities geared toward this goal. Large numbers of residents were active in lobbying for a crosswalk, traffic lights, and other outdoor lights to enhance the safety of this neighbourhood. Many residents also worked towards improving the appearance of their neighbourhood, by painting murals and by lobbying for improved garbage pickup and recycling.

Some parents appeared to be motivated to take part by a desire for more services in their communities:

[Better Beginnings, Better Futures] was a way to eventually develop for themselves some services to which they would not otherwise have access (e.g., parent relief, respite care).

Hoping that the people with the money will really listen to what they have to say.

I like the idea of daycare. It is important for the parents who work and who can not be at home when the children leave for school ...

Better Beginnings, Better Futures represents an opportunity to develop the kind of service they desire, and to work themselves toward the implementation of the desired arrangements.

Helping Others

For many residents, the primary factor which motivated their participation in Better Beginnings, Better Futures was the desire to help others in their communities, especially young people. The project provided them an avenue to do to this:

... it gave me an opportunity to work with the kids... with my kids and then working with other kids ...

I feel that I can contribute a lot. I am involved with other groups too... that can help.

I often wonder how much better I would be if I had had better opportunities. So I'm doing anything that would help the kids get a better chance in life.

We thought we had something good to say [about what people want and how to get people involved].

[Participated because of] my knowledge of the community. Wanting to make sure that the community had a say, that the issues particular to this community were not forgotten.

It was not just the residents with young children who became involved in site projects. Some residents with older children who would not be benefitting as directly from the services offered expressed a desire to help out. One of the Site Reports described:

Many neighbourhood participants, particularly those with older children, believed the project offered something that would have been helpful when they were raising their own young children. They felt the project was a way to give young families some of the things which they did not have themselves.

Something to Do

The picture that many residents painted of their lives was one of unending drudgery, with little to do except sit at home in front of the television. The little that was available to them in the community was often unaffordable or inaccessible. Better Beginnings, Better Futures represented a chance for them to get out of the house and do something:

I was bored. I was isolated and this was an outlet for me.

[There was] nothing bloody else to get involved in.

There isn't much else around to do.

I also felt that if I got involved that I was not vegging any more, like I had been vegging for a year or two... [it was] something to keep me interested, keep me busy.

... getting me out of the house so I wasn't vegging...

It does a lot of that for women, because I always have the same complaint, I sit at home and I look at the walls or watch TV.

Respite from Child Care

Many parents seemed desperate for some relief from child care, and saw in Better Beginnings, Better Futures an opportunity to spend some time away from their children:

... getting myself a couple of hours away from my children, giving me that break.

... I just had nowhere else to go. I was trapped in an apartment with these kids that were out of control and it was really hard. It was an outlet, finally it was a place to go where I didn't have to have the kids near me.

To get away from the kids.

Because my sons get on my nerves and that's the only way to stop it.

Get away from the kids and relax.

Meeting New People

Better Beginnings, Better Futures also gave people the opportunity to meet people from their neighbourhoods and make new friends:

[A chance to make] a lot of new friends.

I love meeting all the new people... a great opportunity to meet new people.

To meet people. I enjoy the food.

To meet people... to know each other.

Other residents looked forward to the opportunity to share ideas and information, especially about issues and problems related to child-rearing:

A way to exchange ideas with other people.

Share information about children and parenting with other parents.

Meet friends and share information about child education.

[Better Beginnings, Better Futures presented an opportunity to] develop contacts with other parents from their community and to share with them.

To Learn and Acquire Skills

Several of those who got involved with Better Beginnings, Better Futures were looking for a chance to learn new skills and to acquire new knowledge:

... this gave me a chance to work, learn lots more new knowledge, be trained and that, and also be able maybe to share some of the knowledge that I had already gained.

I think a few of them are realizing there are some skills they can develop, you know, even by sitting on committees or learning to take minutes or those kinds of things, to build their self-esteem and leadership, develop those skills.

Learning things that may help them to be better parents.

To learn English.

I'm looking for a lot of knowledge and experience.

Some see in the project an opportunity to learn and to share with their community new skills.

Curiosity, Keeping in Touch with What's Going on in the Community

Other residents stated that they got involved in the project because they wanted to keep in touch with what was happening in their community, especially as it related to their children:

It gives me a chance to know what's going on in my community.

To find out what's going on in the community.

Saw other people happily involved [and wanted to find out what it was about].

[Participation was motivated by] the desire to know what was going on in the project.

Because my child is participating in the project anyway, through the school, I wanted to know what was going on, what the project would offer him" (this parent had been initially suspicious about what they would be doing with her child).

[Better Beginnings, Better Futures is a way to] acquire better knowledge of the resources offered in the community, and the various ways of using these services.

Doing Something Meaningful, Interesting, Valued

Many parents in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures communities participated in the projects because it seemed interesting to them, and gave them the chance to use their energy and skills in doing something that was meaningful and valued:

I was curious... this seemed really neat... I had never been involved in that before.

I love what I'm doing here. It fulfils a lot of things... I am able to use my skills... A few years ago, it is like you are sitting around not doing anything and it is really frustrating because you know you have those skills and there seems to be no need for the skills you have.

I like working with a variety of people and the challenge involved.

There was a lot to do with young kids and I love working with young kids.

Sounded really interesting.

[Better Beginnings, Better Futures was a way for residents to] be recognized as an individual, rather than as "the spouse of... " or "the mother of ..."

Friendly Persuasion

Not all of those who came to participate in the activities going on in their site did so because they were enthusiastic about the opportunities for helping themselves or their communities. A number of people participated, at least initially, because they were “prodded”, “encouraged”, “bugged”, or even “dragged” to an activity or a meeting by a friend or by one of the service providers:

I first got involved when a good friend got hired... and I dropped in to have coffee with her when I had nothing else to do.

A Sense of Belonging, Being a Part of Something

Community members were motivated by different things in the course of participating in their site’s activities. While initially they may have participated because they were “prodded” or because they simply wanted something for their children to do, many residents came to feel a sense of belonging in the project, a sense that they were a part of something worthwhile that was going on in their communities:

You know I am not sure people always hope to get something, beyond just feeling good... when these people started volunteering they didn’t know about jobs coming... for most people that is not the motivator... Now that we are established and people know who we are, I think there is a motivation just in terms of supporting it... I think that is part of it, getting involved in something people feel o.k. about.

Once that happens [people come out to the project]... people get something from it... once people are here I think they generally start to feel comfortable with the people that are around, then it is validated, ‘cause the next expectation is that they can do something... there is an expectation there. You can do something, and that we would really like it if you did... and there is almost an expectation that people will.

[Better Beginnings, Better Futures] had to offer concrete programs, that the community said they wanted, to get people “in the door”. Once they were in the door, they would meet others, grow more comfortable with staff, get to know the organization, and maybe show interest in getting involved in running the organization.

At first, I didn’t really know what was going on, but I do now. I get emotional about it now, about certain things. I care what happens now. I know more about the project and what they’re trying to achieve.

[Better Beginnings, Better Futures was a way to] develop a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood, to the community, and more particularly to the Francophone community.

Mostly to get you out of the house. That's how it starts, it's just somewhere to go and socialize at first...then you see the broader picture and you want to get involved because if it's going to make it, if the program's going to last, that's what it's going to take...

Belief in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Vision

Some of the residents involved in the sites indicated that their belief in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures principles and vision motivated them to take part in the project:

I think it is great that agency and community are working together and I agree with what Better Beginnings is trying to do.

When I believe in something such as Better Beginnings, I give all the time and effort I can until the completion.

Because it's a great project.

According to one of the Site Reports, residents felt like they were part of something that would really make a difference for life in their community.

The Possibility of Gaining Employment

One of the guiding principles of all the Better Beginnings, Better Futures sites was that, where possible, they would employ community residents in offering their services. In communities where many people are suffering from the effects of financial hardship, it would not be surprising if the desire for a job or for additional income would be a prime motivating factor. While there were some individuals who indicated that their interest in finding employment was the main reason for getting involved with Better Beginnings, Better Futures, relatively few of the residents indicated that this was an important source of motivation for their involvement. According to one Site Report, this may have been because people were reluctant to admit that this was their major interest in getting involved, feeling that:

Others would question one's devotion to the project, or that one would be perceived as being selfish and motivated only by personal gain. The open acknowledgement of

an intent to hire neighbourhood residents caused anxiety for those who sought that employment. There was a risk of expressing that desire and opening the door for someone else to question one's motives, and it placed neighbourhood peers in potential competition with one another for jobs. Since volunteering with an organization prior to employment is a common and successful method of finding a job, it is no surprise that every neighbourhood staff person hired up till September 30, 1992 had been previously involved as a volunteer... The anxiety and discomfort for neighbourhood residents about seeking employment comes from a formal structure which supported neighbourhood employment as a concept, but did not recognize and support the accompanying process to achieve it.

6.1 Discussion

Not all community members want to participate in Better Beginnings, Better Futures in the same way. In addition to feeling intimidated by meetings with service providers, many residents were simply not interested in meetings, discussions about goals and budgets, or long-range plans. They were more interested in doing things that were more active, or which involved direct contact with the children and adults in their neighbourhood. As one of the site researchers wrote:

Most of the parents attending the Parent Group were not interested or did not have the time to get involved in managing the project. They attended for social reasons, to receive emotional support, and to share information about parenting. Some people attended because they also wanted to be informed about (the project). Seven of the eight Southeast Asian residents who were interviewed also said they wanted to be involved in the "support group" (the Parent Group).

Another report described a situation in which

The six parents who have until now sat on the coordinating committee have demonstrated a particular interest in the overall administration of the project, in addition to their interest in program development... We can surmise that the other members of the working groups (28 in all) are mostly interested, at least for the time being, in using their skills at the level of program development and implementation.

In addition to not being interested in planning and managing the project, many residents could not afford the time to participate in meetings and planning sessions, and were more interested in making time-limited, event-specific contributions. This suggests the need for a high degree of flexibility concerning the nature and amount of contribution expected of community members. As a service provider at one of the sites stated:

We need more people, but I think you have to recognize too, because we do have people who come to the program but that's it and if that's where they're comfortable you have to respect that too...

Residents are looking for and ready for a variety of involvements, for example, participating in a program group, consulting about program content, volunteering to help others or to work at the site, being a committee member and making policy decisions, or working as a project employee. The framework for thinking about “legitimate” ways of resident involvement and influence over the demonstration projects has to recognize the value of all of these different connections with residents. It is also to be expected that the ways in which residents are willing to begin their participation in a project may not be the same as the types of involvement they will want as they become more confident and experienced. There needs to be provisions for both “new” and “experienced” resident participants and for the development of new resident “leaders” to replace currently active residents as they move on.

The reasons participants gave for their involvement with the sites suggests that many find the program or service components of the projects attractive and that initially fewer may be drawn to purely administrative functions. Their search for social connections and for opportunities to do interesting and useful things also suggests that the personal benefits to participants from finding these types of involvement will be important. If so, the process of participating in the project will be a powerful vehicle for helping residents to change their lives.

7.0 WHAT DID RESIDENTS DO?

When the original proposals for the demonstration sites were developed, meaningful resident involvement was quite limited at most sites. Participating residents were often heavily outnumbered by professionals and felt quite unsure of themselves in the process. Residents' lack of confidence was also characteristic of their involvement in the early stages of project development once funding was received:

(The meetings) seem weighted with bodies of people (professionals/staff) who are more powerful.

... the first time I sat on (the Steering Committee). I didn't say anything because I was scared if I said anything it might come out wrong... I was so scared.. they would laugh at me...

However, since then, at those sites where progress has been made at increasing volunteer resident involvement, there have been substantial and continuing changes in the quality of the residents' contributions:

Parents involved on all committees are quite vocal and active, and no longer have to be solicited for their comments. Whenever possible, parent representatives from each of the sub-committees report to the (Steering Committee) about issues/activities discussed at the sub-committee. As well, parents have been encouraged to co-chair... meetings... parents (are) involved on each of the working committees where most of the ideas for program planning originate... several parents were responsible for putting together a proposal for a snack program... The parent who presented their proposal commented that 'we appreciate this opportunity to come together as a group and work hard'.

Resident participation is seen as central to the development and operation of this project by service providers and staff as well as by the residents who are highly involved. It has had a major impact on two programs in particular... (that) grew to a large extent out of the residents' knowledge of the community.

... parents who were members of the working groups on nutrition and academic problems seem to have worked more at the implementation level of programs rather than at their conception. The working group on daycare carried out... a survey of parents' daycare needs. The findings... were used... to develop a summer recreation program...

Neighbourhood residents have made contact with over 90% of business and retailers within the neighbourhood, and have made contact with over a dozen businesses and retailers in the wider community; at the last community carnival over 60 businesses contributed nearly \$2,000 in gifts, money, services and equipment.

The following list of the general types of activities residents were involved with at the demonstration sites illustrates some of the most common contributions residents made:

- participation on governing board/steering committee (7 sites)
- participation on board/steering committee sub-committees (7 sites)
- participation on program development work groups (7 sites)
- hired as full-time/part-time staff (7 sites)

-
- volunteering for specific tasks e.g., outreach help at special events, prepare food, child care (6 sites)
 - organizing the delivery of specific program components: e.g., clothing room, library, toy library, friendly visiting, drop-in centre facilities (6 sites)
 - public relations: e.g., speaking, news conferences, theatre presentations (5 or 6 sites)
 - participate in staff selection (4 or 5 sites)
 - help with maintenance of premises/grounds (3 or 4 sites)
 - regular experience at chairing, co-chairing or facilitating meetings (3 or 4 sites)
 - membership in residents - only group (3 sites)
 - lobbying, social action (2 sites)
 - provide translation assistance (1 site)
 - fundraising (1 site)
 - participation in staff performance appraisals (1 site)

7.1 Discussion

It is clear that the nature of resident participation in the demonstration sites has evolved considerably since the proposal development stage of the projects. There is also much work that remains to be done. It is difficult to predict what kind of influence residents will eventually have over the projects or what types of involvements will prove to be the most meaningful over time. As of September 1992, there was a good deal of variation in both the amount and the types of resident involvement across the seven sites.

8.0 WHAT MADE RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT MORE DIFFICULT?

In earlier reports on the proposal development process (Cameron, Pancer, McKenzie-Mohr and Cooper, 1993), a great deal of emphasis was placed on the barriers to involving residents in Better Beginnings, Better Futures. While many of the same obstacles were identified in these Site

Reports on resident involvement, there was a relatively greater emphasis on what was successful rather than what was difficult. The factors that were perceived to have facilitated resident participation are discussed in the next section of this report. In the balance of this section, the things that made resident involvement in the project more difficult will be highlighted. Despite these obstacles, important progress was reported in involving residents at five of the seven demonstration sites surveyed. However, the challenges described below illustrate the complexity of fostering meaningful resident participation in these prevention projects.

Procedures at Meetings

Five of the seven Site Reports pointed out aspects of project meetings that made it more difficult for residents to become involved. A common concern was that most meetings were scheduled during professionals' working hours and this may not be suitable for some residents:

Can only the parents who don't work attend meetings?

... meetings during the day preclude people working or studying outside of the home...

... meetings were held almost exclusively during the day...

In addition, at several sites, there was a concern that the location of meetings tended to exclude some residents - for example, at a particular school, in a community centre identified with one part of the community, by being physically distant from some people or by being too small. Finally, there was a struggle at most sites to find meeting discussion and decision-making procedures that would be more straight-forward and not exclude residents from the process:

Nobody really listened... it was just all talk... nobody cared what we had to say (resident describing early phases of project).

The whole process of decision-making was alien to many residents, who had little experience with rules of order, social service jargon, and other aspects of program administration. Residents were often keen to get going and were unused to the lengthy discussions involved in making decisions:

People got tired of waiting for decisions to be made on such things as the location of the site office and the hiring of more staff.

There is now a sense by some of being ‘a second class person’ and that there is no point in going to meetings anymore - because if you can’t vote, you will not be heard.

... service providers could be more active in discussion because they had more experience in participating in committees; residents did not view themselves as equal partners...

... some of us feel intimidated by a bigger group...

... sometimes it is boring... intimidating... not set up to help people speak or to get parents involved.

You people (service providers) use too many big words... What do you mean?

Often there is an assumption that every one “knows” what is going on and how to take part. Occasionally someone will ask questions like “What is a (Board/Steering Committee)” and “what is a 2 to 1 ratio?” At times, new participants in particular, seem lost in the process.

... big problems with Parents’ Group... they need guidance, steering... they’re lost, lost... they’re going in all various directions... they really need someone...

... (one person got involved) because the focus was on being creative and visionary and dreaming about the possibilities for children and the community. The current stage, however, is the planning, implementation and management of all those dreams and I personally hate that kind of work.

... parents thought the project was bureaucratic and slow-moving...

The parents are making efforts but do not have experience in the administration (of such a project).

A related concern expressed was about the number of professionals involved in meetings and how professionals related to residents. Difficulties noted were: professionals’ lack of commitment to resident involvement; professional priorities dominating discussions; professionals’ lack of confidence in residents; and professional language being used at meetings:

Community and parents is where it all starts... parents feel very intimidated when they are surrounded by the agencies, especially the Children’s Aid... important that parents feel comfortable to speak up... we (service providers) speak a different language.

Physical and Practical Barriers

Five Site Reports commented on the physical barriers to residents' active involvement in the project, such as physical distances, lack of transportation and difficulty in finding and paying for child care. It was also pointed out that many potential participants were trying to cope with frequent crises and inadequate resources in their daily lives. This was seen as making consistent participation more difficult by residents. In addition, quite a few residents reported feeling intimidated by the demands of the project and being quite unsure of their own abilities:

It's less trouble just minding your own business than not, you know... getting involved means getting involved in all kinds of trouble, you know.

Parents stated on one occasion that they did not feel capable enough when it came time to interact with the agency representatives and to use their decision-making power.

Work Requirements

One of the most common strains on residents participating in project development was the very heavy demands placed on their time, particularly at those sites relying on smaller numbers of residents:

...we need some more people... it's just us and we're doing, doing...

... I'm even feeling pressure now, just on a daily basis. Today I decided well this [Focus Group interview] was probably more important than the program, but then, everybody who usually goes to the program said why aren't you coming to the program any more, so you're feeling like oh, geez, I should go to that, but wait, should I go to this, and you have to decide for yourself what you can do, because you know, sometimes, some days you can do it all and some days you just can't..

They come to think that you're constantly there --- they depend on you... we don't want to disappoint them, but we're wearing ourselves out.

They bug you to go do something else and if you're not there they are upset.

There's so many chairs to fill and only so many people to fill them.

Residents sometimes reported feeling strained because of these time demands. There was talk about the dangers of "burnout". This issue is discussed in more depth in the section on negative outcomes from participation.

One site with quite low levels of volunteer resident involvement had to deal with some important barriers that were not mentioned in the other Site Reports:

Higher levels and more meaningful resident participation in the management of the project were constantly held up as priorities... yet neither of these goals was achieved in the first 16 months. Again, one explanation might be the bogged down state of the organization in doing practical problem-solving and planning in recruitment.

Overall, continued instability in the organization made it difficult to concentrate on increasing the number of residents involved with the project and increased participation of those who were already involved.

This same site also reported difficulty understanding government expectations regarding resident involvement. Another site reported that conflict between project staff and members of a particular sub-group in the community had a negative impact on the group's involvement in the project. Several sites changed their structures for project management and program development over this time period making it unclear how many and in what way residents could be involved.

Family and Community Obstacles

Most active residents were women with family responsibilities. Quite a few found it difficult to do what they wanted in the project and continue to spend as much time with their children. In addition, some women reported opposition from their partners to their involvement in the project. Finally, many experienced pressure and distancing from other community residents when they volunteered. These important obstacles to resident involvement will be discussed in greater detail in the section on the negative outcomes from resident participation.

As indicated earlier, no site reported substantial success in involving volunteer members of minority communities on their main decision-making bodies. Besides language barriers, there were differences in values and expectations to be overcome:

Most of the Southeast Asians who come to... meetings did not have a strong command of... English...

... Part of it has to do with the culture in that male or the grandparents are the ones that are the vocal people in the home, but have not seen themselves as part of a group, like in a school setting... its not the thing for the mother to go out..

... some new immigrants are not welcome... (also) have difficulty with going out in cold winter weather...

These were other barriers to resident participation in the projects that were commented on in single Site Reports - for example, residents being socially isolated, an attitude of cynicism towards the project, conflicts and cliques within the community, physically distant parts of the community. One report commented on the lack of orientation for new participants:

... new members (are) not given a serious orientation... (there were) at least three instances in the first 16 months where a resident came to a (Steering Committee) but did not come back...

8.1 Discussion

It is clear that the road for a resident to become active in a Better Beginnings, Better Futures project is not without obstacles. Many residents have had to overcome their own fear and sense of inadequacy, risking failure by trying on new roles and responsibilities, coping with the pressures of managing many other family responsibilities, risking the criticism of friends, peers and sometimes partners, overcoming cultural expectations about women, struggling with a new language, daring to make suggestions to more confident and experienced professionals, sitting in formal meetings with unfamiliar roles and procedures, managing high demands for their volunteer time, sitting through long and complex discussions, working through conflicts and trying to understand a very complex primary prevention initiative. The many residents who have succeeded in becoming active and in contributing to the demonstration projects have done so because of their own desires and determination. As discussed in the next section, many non-residents also worked very hard to make resident involvement a reality at the sites.

9.0 FOSTERING RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

A great deal of effort has been invested in fostering resident involvement at the seven demonstration sites. Some sites have been able to make more progress than others. The discussion in this section focuses on the things that have made resident participation easier and more productive. This information comes from two sources: (1) the things identified in the Site Reports by respondents as being helpful in overcoming barriers to resident participation; (2)

characteristics associated with greater resident involvement selected from the Site Reports. What follows is not presented as “the last word” on fostering resident participation in these demonstration projects; but, as of September 1992, it does reflect the experiences and opinions of those most familiar with the challenges.

Different Objectives for Resident Representation

The sites have developed different visions of resident participation. There were different ideas guiding actions about how many volunteer residents should be involved, where they should participate, and how many other types of participants should also be present. These ideas about the level and type of resident involvement have had an impact on recruiting attempts at the sites. For example, it may be no coincidence that one of the two sites with very low levels of volunteer involvement does not accept the principle of 50% volunteer resident involvement on its key decision-making structures or the usefulness of the distinction between volunteer and paid resident participation. The second “low-participation” site had initially set a goal of attaining 50% volunteer resident involvement on its steering committee by the end of the five year demonstration project. The sites with the highest levels of volunteer resident involvement all seem to have had clearer objectives to achieve at least 50% resident involvement on key work groups as quickly as possible:

All committees have as part of their mandate to work towards 51% parent participation; however, no specific time lines have been set. (Site 1)

... on July 8, 1992... agree that 2 of 8 community representatives on the (Steering Committee) could be staff... set numbers at 8 community representatives and 4 agency representatives. (Site 2)

... practice has been that residents make up about 50% of most committees, teams or boards. However, there is no specific rule, 50% is a guideline... The long-term plan is that neighbourhood persons will eventually fill all positions on the (Steering Committee). However, ... this has not been officially agreed upon... (Site 3)

... at the time of the proposal 4 of 15 on the (Steering Committee) were residents. The goal was to 50% by year 5... to have at least 2 residents on (program development groups)... until early 1992, the project did not have set rules for attendance or for selecting resident and service providers. Whoever showed up was accepted with no

questions asked, probably because there was such a desperate need for resident input.
(Site 4)

(In proposal) our plan is to have the Board... ratio to be 2:1 (resident:agency), likely to be approximately 18 members... there was agreement that the sub-committees would strive for this kind of membership but should not be prohibited from working if they did not have this ratio... employees can't serve on Board... can attend and take part but no vote...
(Site 5)

The objective (for the Steering Committee) was to eventually arrive at an equitable representation with 6 residents, 6 employees and 6 agency representatives during the year when the (program) activities were being developed.
(Site 6)

The board was to have 6 residents and 6 agency representatives... the (parents group) was to be 100% parents from area schools... the (program development) groups were to be 100% parents collaborating with staff to develop process... other sub-committees were to include at least 50% residents.
(Site 7)

Priority Given to Resident Participation

In the Site Reports from two of the sites with the greatest numbers of volunteer residents involved, it was made very clear that having high levels of resident involvement in all important decisions was a very important priority that received a great deal of attention early in the project development process. Resident involvement was a basic value that influenced all decisions and work procedures at these sites. This point is made strongly in the following interpretive summary provided by a local Site Researcher:

The principle of partnership, and the support, commitment and resources provided by all partners are key factors in accomplishing the level of neighbourhood participation in this project. First, there are non-neighbourhood staff who believe in the principle of neighbourhood involvement, and who work daily to make it a reality. Second, the participating agencies are represented by people who believe in, and are committed to, the meaningful involvement of neighbourhood residents. This commitment and shared belief among staff and agencies provides a positive, encouraging atmosphere in which to recruit and involve neighbourhood residents in a way which is non-judgemental, respectful and meaningful. Finally, neighbourhood leaders themselves are committed and motivated to (work for) their community. They have agreed to take the risk of becoming a partner, and have engaged in the hard work that is required for meaningful community participation. Successful involvement of the neighbourhood as an equal partner does not happen by accident. It is the result of intentional and committed work on behalf of all partners in the project. Without this commitment and involvement of

any of these partners, this level of neighbourhood involvement, both in quality and quantity, would not be possible. The lack of active neighbourhood participation in many communities is not because residents in those communities are unmotivated, uninterested or unwilling to be involved, but because there is lack of support, encouragement, resources and opportunity.

Modify Working Procedures

Most Site Reports highlighted the need to modify the procedures normally used by professionals in meetings and in making decisions. It was considered important to make the atmosphere of meetings more comfortable for residents becoming involved for the first time. This generally involved trying to simplify formal decision-making procedures, encouraging professionals not to use “unnecessary jargon”, and trying different ways of presenting information at meetings (e.g. , adding a visual presentation to a verbal one and providing a verbal clarification of written material). Suggestions were made to hold meetings at times convenient to residents rather than necessarily during professional working hours. It was also seen as important to allow residents to speak for themselves and to take on responsibilities such as chairing meetings and making reports from sub-committees to the board:

(In reference to low resident involvement) the community development worker became the main vehicle by which the opinion and concerns of the residents were heard (at the Steering Committee).

... service providers have also identified the need for a more informal and flexible structure for resident participation within the project..

(It was) suggested that residents become involved with concrete tasks that they are comfortable with before participating in committees - participate on sub-committees before attending Steering Committee...

... people can talk about language (jargon) problem... local literacy program has helped with language clarity...

... collection box in which 25 cents must be paid for each big word used in meeting - box never actually used, but it has made people more careful...

... meeting time changed to accommodate residents...

Training and Ongoing Support

There was general agreement that concrete supports were necessary to foster resident involvement - for example, paying for or providing child care during meetings, compensating for lost revenue if appropriate, helping with transportation. Four Site Reports commented on the need to train residents for the roles that they were playing on boards and committees and, perhaps, to provide them with more between-meeting support so that they can take part in discussions in a more effective fashion. The need to provide staff support to sub-committees and working groups was mentioned in one report.

Limit Professional Involvement

At most sites, there was a perception that it was necessary to control the number of professionals on decision-making structures, and in some cases, the types of professionals involved, so that residents would not be intimidated and overwhelmed by more experienced participants:

... felt that by asking (city-wide) agencies to withdraw, residents would feel more comfortable... perceived dislike/distrust of these agencies... wanted to increase community contact over the project...

One of the most important decisions to change from a structure controlled by agency representatives to a structure controlled by the residents was the decision to restrict (agency) participation at the (Steering Committee) meetings...

It may be no coincidence that the two sites with the highest numbers of non-volunteer residents on their board/steering committee and sub-groups also reported the most difficulty encouraging volunteer residents to participate on these structures.

Encouraging Participation of Ethnic Minorities

As suggested earlier, as of September 1992, no site reported much success at involving members of minority communities, particularly when language proficiency was an obstacle. However, outreach was ongoing and there were ideas about what would be helpful - hiring of staff from minority communities, having written publicity material in different languages, developing some program components specifically for minorities (e.g., a parent group, a parent-child

program), using translations at meetings and in outreach, establishing working relationships with associations representing minority groups, and having some separate organizational structures and program development groups that operate in different languages.

Government Requirements

The negotiations between the sites and the government representatives affected resident involvement in three major ways: (1) by reducing the size of target communities for some sites changing which residents should be involved; (2) insisting that some sites increase the numbers of residents involved on their main decision-making bodies or that they involve residents more quickly than proposed; (3) requiring more formal procedures and controls on boards/steering committees which changed what was expected of participating residents:

(Government representatives) requested that the decision-making structure be clarified and formalized and resident involvement increased... catchment area made smaller and some resident representatives had to withdraw... decision (had) to be by vote..

The Government told the group... in late April 1991, that more parents should be involved in the (Steering Committee) and the (program) groups.

... government representatives emphasized that (they) wanted to see more residents who were neither service providers nor staff..

Other Suggestions

Four Site Reports stressed the need for a site to have community development or outreach workers to recruit residents. Two Site Reports suggested that having programs available makes attracting new residents easier.

9.1 Discussion

There have been quite different rates of success in involving residents as volunteers in the seven projects - both in terms of total numbers involved and in residents influencing project development. It is not improbable that the challenge of recruiting and involving community residents is more difficult in some communities than in others. It is also clear that site representatives in the various demonstration communities had different strategies and levels of

enthusiasm for involving residents. These differences probably had significant impacts on the nature of resident involvement in the communities.

The clarity of the resident involvement goals and the site representatives' commitment to these goals appeared to be two basic influences on resident involvement at the sites. Having a clear idea of how many residents were to be involved on major decision-making structures and a definite timeline for achieving these goals seemed to foster more successful involvement. Wanting residents involved in significant ways early in the development process also appeared to be important. Second, there was some evidence that sites with large resident involvement included representatives who had a passionate commitment to their resident involvement goals. They were priority requirements without which they were reluctant to proceed with other development tasks. The sites with lesser resident involvement seemed to be less adamant about the importance of early resident involvement in their plans.

It also seemed necessary to control the number of professionals and staff involved in settings where active volunteer resident involvement was important. Too many non-residents involved, particularly in the early stages of project development, made resident contributions more intimidating and less common. The minimum goal for comfortable resident participation on the board/steering committee, and if possible on the other key groupings, may be half of the people present. Professionals can help also by taking care to present their ideas in a clear fashion, to try new ways of presenting material at meetings, to simplify meeting decision-making procedures to the extent possible, to meet at times convenient to residents, and to use discussion formats that make residents talking less intimidating. The values professionals communicate to residents about their contributions are also important. While not apparently developed to any great extent at these demonstration sites as of September, 1992, orientation services for new resident participants, training in meeting procedures, and between meeting supports to prepare for complex discussions should be helpful. As the projects unfold over time, some residents should need these kind of adaptations less as they become more experienced and there will begin to be a cadre of experienced volunteer "leaders" whom new participants can watch and model. Later on, the challenge is likely to center on preparing second and third generations of resident "leaders" and to find a balance between experienced and newer resident participants.

The road ahead in terms of cross-cultural participation is unclear. It is difficult to imagine that multi-language meetings will be practical. It may be that minority group representatives able to function in the majority language will have to be recruited to participate regularly on project structures and other ways found to reach out in minority languages to solicit the opinions of more members of minority groups. As the staffing complements of the projects increase and become more representative of the host communities, such outreach and recruiting possibilities should increase.

There has been very little guidance available to the sites about how to involve residents. It might be helpful if ways could be found for site representatives to exchange ideas and for them to have access to information about how to initiate and to sustain resident involvement.

10.0 HIRING NEIGHBOURHOOD RESIDENTS

Hiring neighbourhood residents is a major strategy at all demonstration sites for incorporating resident wisdom into project and program development. At most sites, there will be more residents employed by the project than can serve as volunteers on the board/steering committee. When the amount of time employed residents will invest is considered along with what they will learn to do, it is clear that resident employment will have a substantial impact on the projects. What is less evident is how this increasing staff influence will be balanced with the contributions desired from residents as volunteers and as program participants. It is already evident that employing residents has had several important and unexpected impacts on project development.

Hiring Priorities and Impacts

Large-scale hiring was just beginning at the demonstration sites at the end of the time period for this report. At all sites, employing community residents was considered very important. The full impact of this substantial infusion of residents remains to be felt. Nonetheless, the Site Reports identified a variety of challenges that have come from these changes:

- (1) The “loss” of (usually the most) active volunteer leaders as they become staff;

The dilemma is that neighbourhood participants who are most ready to take on leadership tasks... often are also the most qualified for staff positions.

... The difficulty in making the transition from neighbourhood participant to neighbourhood staff has decreased as the project develops. Part of the reason for this is that neighbourhood staff hired early were involved at a much greater level than those hired later.

- (2) Confusion as resident staff continue to hold board/committee positions that they held as volunteers;

Issue of how residents are viewed when they become staff... some indications that they might feel that they are no longer “representing the community”... Supporting residents to take on new roles while recognizing the contributions they can still make as residents of the community will be as important as developing new roles for residents.

- (3) A “loss of status” as employed residents feel they lose their voice as community representatives and as they find themselves supervised by professionals;

... As neighbourhood representatives they are equal partners... in the (steering committee). As staff... they are in training positions and... not in the same equal relationships with agency representatives and professional staff.

In the beginning, I was a parent with a teeny voice. I didn't feel heard. In the middle as a full-fledged parent who was working part-time, I was heard much clearer, louder. And as I became full-time my voice went teeny again... My whole role was changed from what it was... but I didn't change as a parent... now I don't have the freedom [to speak as a parent]

Relationships of equality and partnership became relationships of inferiority and hierarchy, and the words used to describe these relationships, like ‘supervision’, ‘professional’, and ‘para-professional’, emphasized this change.

- (4) Tensions with neighbourhood peers;

The change in role from participant to staff changed the way these staff persons were perceived and treated by other neighbourhood participants. These neighbourhood staff experienced some rejection, bitterness and anger from their peers, and were even required to step down from positions and membership in the... neighbourhood group or its committees.

Once she/he was hired, she/he became the butt of complaints about how she/he controlled the project, made people do things... she/he was slowly excluded and made to feel unwelcome.

- (5) Loss of incentives for some residents to volunteer;

It seems that some people volunteered to increase the likelihood of their hiring... when they did not get selected, they no longer offered their services. It may be that many of the activities are now being done by (staff)... there may be in addition some resentment that some are working for pay and others are not.

10.1 Discussion

It may be that many of the above unforeseen consequences of residents being employed in the project will be addressed as the sites gain more experience with residents as staff. Resident employment is a pattern that will continue and increase over the next few years. Indeed, employment may become one of the ways residents will eventually exercise their greatest influence over the demonstration projects. Nonetheless, there are a number of points that will need to be clarified in order to reduce current confusions:

- (1) Will residents who are project staff be allowed to serve as voting members on the site's board/steering committee and its sub-committees? If so, will other staff have the same right? It may be that the choice may be between adopting a "co-management" approach (where employees share board responsibilities with non-employees) or a more clear distinction between board and staff roles. Current ad hoc arrangements are likely to create difficulties over time and may not be possible to maintain if the sites become legal non-profit corporations.
- (2) What can residents contribute to the project as volunteers, as employees? What are the incentives to be a volunteer? If residents do the same things as volunteers that they do as staff, then the question 'Why should I volunteer?' is a legitimate one. What should be the proper working relationships between residents who are staff and other community residents coming to the project? It must be clear that, while there are benefits to a resident from becoming an employee, there are also some rights and roles that need to be left behind.
- (3) When they became project employees, what should residents expect from the board, from professionals and others on staff, and from outside professionals? Should residents be treated differently than other employees? It might be useful to discuss these and the above issues with a view towards developing policies at

each site. In addition, orientation and support sessions for residents becoming employees might also prove useful.

11.0 RESIDENT-ONLY GROUPS

Four of the seven demonstration sites had, or wanted to have, some form of resident-only group that was initiated through the project - for example, an independent community group, an advisory group to the board/steering committee, a program group or a program development group. One site attempted somewhat unsuccessfully to link with an existing school's parents group and most sites held periodic meetings of residents for various purposes. Several sites reported the use resident-only groups (with staff support) as part of their program activities.

Where the resident-only groups were clearly integrated into the administrative structure of the site - for example, a program development group making suggestions to the board and implementing program decisions - there were few difficulties reported. However, two sites invested considerable effort into developing an "independent" resident-only community group with unclear linkages to the project's administration. Early on, one of these community groups made substantial contributions to the initial project proposal and to the early project development stages at the site. Yet, as the sites' administrative structures become formalized, as residents began to participate on these structures, and as residents were hired and program activities begun, the purpose of these community groups became less clear and their influence diminished:

... the neighbourhood group's role remains fluid, informal and unclear. Many of the persons in the neighbourhood group also play additional roles within the project, thus blurring the lines between the project and the neighbourhood group... the majority of... (the) neighbourhood group members at present are participants on the (board) and its teams...

Conceptually, it doesn't make sense that (the neighbourhood group) doesn't fit. They must fit because they are the people of this project. I think this is it, to have them as equal partners in the... process by having them develop the community development part of the project.

... the neighbourhood groups' role as the voice of the community became unnecessary... attendance.. began to decline and (the group became) disconnected to the business of planning the project.

A situation that sparked some heated debate over the role of the (residents-only) group occurred at a Steering Committee meeting. . . staff told the Steering Committee that the (residents-only) group decided to survey the agencies (involved with the project). . . and that it was recommending to change the name of the project. . . At that point, a decision about the role of the (residents-only) group had not been made.

The second issue was the unclear role of the (residents-only) Group. Was it an advisory group that the Steering Committee would regularly approach to share information about policies and programming and get feedback? Was it a group that could make recommendations to the Steering Committee or only provide input on recommendations made by the Steering Committee? Was it a group that the Steering Committee would consult with on a “as-needed” basis? Or, was it a group that wanted to identify and work towards its own needs/desires outside those related to Better Beginnings? The group took any one or more of these roles at different points in time.

The (residents-only) group seemed to be working in a parallel fashion to the Steering Committee; that is, it was working on some of the same tasks as the Steering Committee but it was not working as a sub-group of. . . the Steering Committee.

11.1 Discussion

Over the next few years, the demonstration sites will inevitably become more complex and more formal organizations as the numbers of staff and program responsibilities grow. Increasingly, resident impact on the projects will come from their status as volunteer members of administrative structures, as employees and as program participants. Despite their important contributions to early project development, it is difficult to see how independent residents-only groups will continue to play a major role in project development. If these groups are to continue their affiliation with the project, it may have to be as independent community organizations following their own priorities that receive support from the project or, more formally, by becoming a program development group reporting to the board/steering committee. Continued ambiguity may only exaggerate the sense of frustration and disappointment.

12.0 PAYMENT AND RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEERS

One of the difficult issues faced early on by the sites had to do with payment of resident volunteers. In almost all the sites, there had been discussions, sometimes lengthy and heated ones, about if and how residents should be compensated for things that might be considered to be

“volunteer” activities, such as attending meetings, organizing community events, and helping out with programs. In all but one of the sites, it was decided that only residents’ direct expenses would be compensated. Parents were to be reimbursed for childcare, transportation and other expenses that were incurred in order for them to participate in the project. In practice, residents were also compensated on a “fee-for-service” basis for specific, time-limited tasks, such as cooking and serving meals at meetings and round-tables, setting up and taking down playgroup decorations and equipment, serving as breakfast attendants.

Residents were paid (for a while) for the time they spent attending committee meetings in only one of the sites. In this site, they were given \$10 plus an additional \$7.40 an hour to attend meetings. Officially, this was designated as payment for childcare and transportation expenses, but it was understood that this was really intended to compensate residents for their time and contribution. Initially, this payment appeared to be sanctioned by the Ministries. The minutes of one of the visits by a ministry representative to the site in May of 1991 indicated that:

[The ministry representative] said that involving many community residents was critical - she added that all residents should be covered for their childcare expenses, and also that one way to involve parents of 0-4 could be to hire the parents as consultants ...

12.1 Reasons for Paying Volunteers

To Encourage Greater Participation

There were a number of reasons for paying residents to volunteer their time to the project. One was that it would encourage more people from the community to participate. Indeed, in the site where residents were paid for their committee work, there was a certain amount of pride in the fact that volunteers were being paid, and a belief that this had encouraged people to get involved:

No other project pays their volunteers except for their actual expenses for childcare and transportation ...

I’ll bet we have the biggest board in Better Beginnings, Better Futures, at least for neighbourhood reps.

This was also one of the sites with the highest numbers of “volunteer” residents involved. Residents in the other sites echoed the notion that payment would encourage people to become involved, and would serve to maintain their involvement:

It gives them more incentives to continue volunteering.

Paying for resident involvement would be a big motivator.

The biggest [source of motivation would be to] pay for their time.

To Compensate for Costs Incurred

Another reason for paying volunteers was to compensate them for the costs that they would incur in participating. This was considered a legitimate and necessary form of payment in all of the sites. One of the sites also had a policy of providing financial compensation to residents who experienced a loss of salary by being absent from work to attend to site business.

Fairness

A number of the sites acknowledged that there was a basic inequity between service providers and residents that may have prevented a more equal partnership from developing between the two groups. This inequity stemmed from the fact that service providers were being paid for their participation, while residents were not. As one Site Report stated:

Some felt that since agency people were on the board as part of their paid jobs, and therefore indirectly paid for their attendance, they were implicitly given more worth than neighbourhood people, who were there voluntarily and received no financial contribution.

This theme was repeated in some of the other sites and was summarized very succinctly by a service provider who said:

I get paid to do this... why not reward resident efforts?

Need

Many of the residents in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures communities are suffering from financial hardship. Money earned from volunteering could serve to provide a welcome supplement to their incomes. This theme was addressed in a number of the Site Reports:

That money makes a big difference if this isn't your job. If you don't have two cars or two incomes that money makes all the difference... The last year would've been a whole lot different if we didn't have this. I don't know what we would've done.

Well, if the money was available, I don't think it would hurt anyone to be paid a small amount just by the month to supplement their low income.

They need the money.

12.2 Reasons for Not Paying Volunteers

Reduces Intrinsic Motivation

Somewhat surprisingly, there were many residents who were strongly opposed to the idea of paying people for volunteer work. These feelings appeared to derive from a belief that people who want to be paid for their participation aren't really committed to the project for its own sake:

People have to come on board without incentives...

... some people want payment for everything...

Well, I think that would kind of take the heart out of volunteering. I mean, you have to be dedicated to be a volunteer. You really have to want to change things and I think putting a dollar value on it demeans it

I don't know. I've kind of mixed feelings about that. I find when you start paying people to do volunteer jobs, sometimes what happens is you make bad friends among people, like they are doing it for the jobs. They lost the intrinsic value of doing... the joy of doing something to help out. That would be my only fear. Sure, some people could use the money so they might have a bit of extra money to supplement, I'm sure they'll really appreciate it, I'm just not sure how good it will be for the program.

Some of the service providers expressed the same concern, although not as strongly:

[Paying people to volunteer] rocks the balance that I think is a healthy community, to help your neighbour for nothing... well, they are not volunteering if you are paying them... I think a volunteer is someone who is not paid for their service that they

render. It doesn't mean that they shouldn't be covered for costs incurred to them, to render the service. Volunteers' cost should be reimbursed.

There was some evidence, at least initially, that a number of individuals who participated were motivated solely by the prospect of earning additional income, or getting a job. One of the sites reported that some of the people who volunteered their time, expecting to be paid at some point, dropped out of the project when they realized they would not be paid. There was other evidence, however, that payment was not necessarily detrimental to intrinsic interest in the project. In the one site that had paid volunteers for their time serving on committees, it was decided, about a year into the project, to discontinue the practice. There was a fear that participation in committees would drop dramatically as a result of this decision. When payments stopped, however, no one dropped out of the project, and neighbourhood participation continued to increase. There was a feeling that paying volunteers had been an effective way of encouraging involvement initially, but needed to be discontinued as the project grew and changed:

The group has grown and changed since that time, and the arrangement that worked then is causing a lot of dissatisfaction, plus, we just won't be able to pay for this system the way it is any more. Another thing about this is that our process fits with what I saw written down in the original proposal, and that is that the money from the project would stay in the community as much as possible by paying neighbourhood people to do things. At first, we hired parents as consultants, but now we've already started hiring parents as staff, so we're holding to our principles, but we're making a transition now.

Inequities

While paying residents for committee work may have reduced the inequity between residents and service providers, it may have produced other inequities in the project, between those who are paid for their participation and those who are not paid. Several of the residents at the site where people were initially paid for their committee work felt that this had happened. While those attending meetings were being paid, residents who participated in other ways, such as organizing and distributing emergency food, were not. As one resident stated:

People like me think it's insane that we sit around the table and get paid to discuss what to do, and then others are going to have to go and do the work that we discussed for nothing.

A concern that this practice would result in a “two-tiered system of rewarding volunteers,” and that it would “split the very group we’re trying to unite” was the major reason that the policy was discontinued.

Expense

Another reason for not paying individuals for the time that they volunteer is the expense involved. This was another reason why the policy of paying for committee work was discontinued at the site that utilized this practice. With increasing levels of participation, it was becoming difficult to find money in the budget to sustain these payments. In addition, the government expressed a concern with the procedure, primarily because of the large costs involved, and indicated that they would no longer endorse the practice.

Recognizing Volunteers

While most of the sites felt that a policy of paying volunteers was too problematic to implement, there was still a desire to recognize the contribution of community members to the project. Indeed, at one of the sites, the parents involved with the project felt that payment or other gratuities should be used to recognize and reward already active parents, rather than as a way to motivate inactive parents. In order to accomplish this, the site established a “Fun and Recognition Committee” to organize and plan events that would recognize the contributions of the volunteering parents. Parents seemed to feel more comfortable with planning these special events to recognize the efforts of the volunteers.

12.3 Discussion

In retrospect, it may seem inevitable that Better Beginnings, Better Futures sites would be unable to sustain a policy of paying their volunteers. As more and more residents got involved in planning and providing programs and activities, the expense would mount to unmanageable levels. In addition, hiring became a more substantial way of involving residents. But, as discussed in a previous section, hiring residents has raised new issues about the roles volunteers will continue to play in the projects and their incentives for doing so.

13.0 RESIDENT/STAFF/SERVICE PROVIDER INTERACTIONS

Relations Between Residents and Service Providers

For almost all of the sites, residents and service providers developed a relationship of trust and respect only after some time and much hard work. Site Reports typically used words such as “strained”, “intimidated”, “mistrustful”, “uneasy” to describe the relations between service providers and residents at the start of the project. There were many inherent inequities between the two groups that had to be overcome before a solid relationship could be built. Service providers were paid for the time they spent on the project, while, for the most part, residents were not. Service providers were often professionally educated, while residents typically were not. Service providers were familiar with the language of social services, and were more knowledgeable about things such as rules of order, dealing with government representatives, report-writing, and formulating goals. To community residents, this whole area of activity was often new and frightening. In addition, service providers often came to the project with different priorities and viewpoints than did residents. As one Site Report described the situation:

[Service providers tend to come] with their model, and [the resident] is coming with life experiences.

All of these differences tended to make many residents feel intimidated and mistrustful of the service providers, at least initially:

We’re not familiar with the jargon that the professionals used.

[We’re not] certain of being able to fully understand [what goes on in meetings when professionals are talking].

For some reason, despite all the ways in which neighbourhood people are part of the decision-making process within this project, they are interpreting things as if they do not have any authority and that they are subject to or inferior to the staff and the agency reps. There seems to be a deep sense of doubt, mistrust and suspicion that the agency reps and staff don’t actually mean it when they say that neighbourhood residents are equal partners in this project.

... it has evolved from initial stages... in the beginning [the parents] were really intimidated...

... I still think they feel intimidated... At [the] last Steering Committee meeting [there was a lot of] high fallutin' language...

Some of the mistrust between residents and service providers stemmed from the kind of unequal relationships that they had prior to Better Beginnings, Better Futures, and negative encounters that residents had experienced with some of the agencies that service providers represented. As one Site Report stated:

Community residents can recount numerous experiences with people from agencies or government in which they felt they were not treated with respect, not listened to and therefore rendered powerless.

These negative experiences often led residents to formulate negative stereotypes of professionals. One of the Site Reports recounted that many residents had stereotypes of professionals as “white professional managers” who are “trying to take control”, and who “don’t listen”.

The majority of sites reported a dramatic change in the relations between professionals and residents as time passed. Indeed, in some instances, these relationships went beyond those of collaborators or co-workers, and became very close and personal:

... even people that I was totally terrified of working with at the very beginning, I don't feel that way any more, It's working out really well. I feel comfortable being with them, working with them.

Some of them turn out to be your best friends.

You feel a real click with a number of them that I feel that I'm very close to them.

People seem to have developed more personal relationships with each other and some have come to include or count on these relationships for personal support. There is a feeling of mutual respect and caring that stands out.

Evidence of improved relations was seen not only in what people from each group said about individuals from the other group, but in the way that they began to mingle at meetings. One Site Report described the way in which, initially, agency people would sit with agency people, and residents with residents at Steering Committee meetings. As members of both groups got to know one another better, there was much more mingling and talking between members of the two groups:

[The] atmosphere at most meeting and events is one of friendliness, openness and increased sharing.

While stereotypes that residents held of service providers were beginning to break down, so were the stereotypes that service providers held of community members. A resident of one of the communities described this change in service provider perceptions in the following way:

... some of those people [i.e., service providers, have] come an incredible long way as to how they think and feel about this project and the people that live here... I got this sense that at the beginning that it was business as usual, “we’re going to lead the discussion” type of thing... and I think some of them have almost come a 180 degree turn. Now they’re listening before they’re opening their mouths.

Factors Influencing Relations Between Service Providers and Residents

How did the relations between service providers and residents change so dramatically? The most important factor in improving these relations appeared to be the opportunity for professionals and residents to get to know each other as individuals. It was described as coming through working together as equals to plan programs, or by sharing meals and celebrations. This kind of trust- and rapport-building was mentioned in a number of the Site Reports:

As smaller working groups were formed and as community residents and agency people began to work more directly, the feelings around trusting each other began to change. People became more reliant on each other in order to get the work done.

The Schedule A [i.e., program] planning and development process was the central context in which the behaviour and actions of non-neighbourhood participants [i.e., service providers] were judged by neighbourhood residents.

...I’m just thinking of the times where I’ve connected with them [i.e., service providers], like [when] we had a pot luck lunch at Christmas and [the service providers] all participated, they didn’t have to but they had and that was seeing them [on] a whole different level... it was just one-on-one and you got to know them on a personal level...

In many instances, the service providers made conscious attempts to make residents feel more comfortable, appreciated and equal. They tried to make meetings less formal and more comfortable for residents. They were more conscious of the kind of language they used and attempted to remove unnecessary jargon from their vocabularies. In a few projects, residents were provided with an orientation to things such as the project’s history and meeting procedures, so that

attendance at meetings would not be so daunting to them. They changed the format for some meetings, getting together in smaller, more informal groups so that residents would feel more at ease contributing. Residents at some sites recognized these efforts, when they were made, and appreciated them:

[Service providers] make a really concerted effort to make you feel like what you have to say is important. [They've attempted to] tone things down a little bit because they were really formal at first.

Another factor that appeared to be important in forming a bond between service providers and residents was open and direct communication between the two groups, especially when problems arose. In one of the sites, the coordinator first hired for the project acted as an intermediary between the residents and service providers. This tended to restrict the number of direct contacts between the two groups, and gave them little opportunity to get to know each other. Consequently, residents continued to feel intimidated in the presence of professionals working with the project. This situation changed when the coordinator changed. When parents expressed their feelings of inadequacy and intimidation directly to the service providers, the service providers were able to tell them very directly how important they were to the project, and how their contributions were appreciated.

In a few of sites, and for some segments of the community, relations between residents and service providers have not progressed to the point of comfort working together. One reason for this appears to be a lack of communication between members of the two groups. In one site, only those who attended meetings got to know the service providers. Those who attended only a few meetings and only occasionally ran into service providers at the community centre felt some discomfort in the presence of the service providers:

[We're] on our guard... [We] wonder about who's talking to her and what they are saying.

Those that did attend meetings and had more opportunity to talk with service providers had more positive impressions:

If they do anything, they try to inform everybody which I think is great and they try to get residents' participation and input before they do anything anyway.

The only interaction I've ever seen with people like that is at the Steering Committee meeting. And there, I find they're not patronizing at all. They seem to really be interested in what we think.

[They] don't consider themselves better than we are in any way.

Residents in the other site that appeared to be suffering from a lack of communication with service providers expressed somewhat greater dissatisfaction:

I think the parents should meet all these people [Steering Committee]... we don't know who the heck they are [i.e., the Steering Committee]... All I met is the parents and the staff.

This lack of communication between residents and service providers was seen as a cause of tension and prejudice between the groups. A vicious cycle seems to have been established. An initial lack of trust between the groups led to a reduction in the amount of communication between them, which, in turn, led to a further erosion of trust.

There were other sources of tension in the relations between service providers and community members. In one site, some of the residents from visible minorities felt that professionals "listen more to the non-visible minorities" and that, consequently, "nobody who is a visible minority wants to talk". Some of these individuals felt that they were considered stupid because their unfamiliarity with the language caused them to talk in a sometimes faltering manner. These feelings of not being heard led to a great deal of anger and frustration:

Why do they ask you to come to meetings? I think if I am asked, that I represent my community and I say my opinion and talk. Why do they invite you to a meeting if they aren't going to listen?

Service providers at one or two sites also acknowledged having said things that may have undermined residents' self-esteem. In one of the sites, both staff and residents have commented on some service providers' lack of sensitivity to residents' feelings of intimidation. This was attributed partly to the fact that many, perhaps even most, of the service providers had little experience working directly with residents.

Relations Between Residents and Staff

Relations between residents and program staff were, for the most part, quite positive, right from the time project staff were first hired. Relations between staff and residents were described

as “positive”, “friendly”, “great”, “fairly good”, “comfortable”, “open”, “supportive”, “nice”. There were several possible reasons for this. Residents were involved in hiring program staff, and perceived them to be working for the community:

We know these people are working for the community, for us.

Moreover, many of the staff hired in the various sites were members of the community, and were well known to many of the residents. Because of this, they may have been trusted more than professionals who represented agencies:

X and Y [staff people] seem to be able to get through to a lot of people that nobody else has been able to get through to, you know. I mean, I've seen some here that talked to Y and X that have slammed the doors on the CAS worker, you know. So I think the difference is Better Beginnings is not a threat to people, and they're beginning to realize that... And I think that makes all the difference in the world.

Friendliness and approachability were considered to be key characteristics of the staff hired at the various sites:

They're all friendly. They don't mind talking to you if you have a problem. Like I had a problem... you know they're going to listen to me, whether they can do anything or not, but they don't mind listening.

... as far as the staff goes, I know they really make an effort to be laid back... (staff person) is really laid back and come on in, and there's very little structure in the office. That's not a bad thing... it is a good thing...

...the door's always open...

... (staff person) has gone out of their way... to make everybody feel comfortable... all of the parents and mothers. . .

... We really hit the jackpot when we hired (staff person)...

... (staff person) is very very nice...

... (staff person) is very good with the parents and the kids, making them feel welcome too.

Also, staff at most sites appeared to make an effort to treat residents with respect, and to seek their input and ideas:

They made me feel like a colleague. I've never felt dumb in their presence... Well, I've always felt that I am not intruding... like I was an asset... they don't treat you like you're a non-person.

They're always asking at the meetings that the community people have a say. They don't do anything until it's all agreed upon by everybody. So everybody has an equal say.

Another possible reason for the positive relations between staff and residents is the frequent contact that residents have with staff. Staff are seen as the "front line" of the projects. In some instances, they are perceived as the group that binds the project together, "meshing perspectives" in trying to make professionals and residents aware of each other's needs, values and ideas.

While relations between staff and residents were, for the most part, positive, there were instances in which staff and residents did not get along. In one of the sites, the original community development worker was dismissed because residents felt that she had been "shutting them out" from program planning activities, rather than working to have them included in these kinds of activities. At meetings, this person would often speak for the residents, rather than allowing residents attending the meetings to speak for themselves.

Problems between staff and residents also emerged at another site. One of the primary reasons for these problems appears to be the location of the community centre. The centre is located in one of the two neighbourhoods for the project, but is some distance from the other neighbourhood. Consequently, there is less frequent interaction (especially informal interaction) between program staff and residents of the more distant neighbourhood, and some of the residents reportedly see staff as somewhat aloof. There was also a perception that there was a difference in the style of the tenant associations of the two neighbourhoods. Leaders of the association in the neighbourhood more distant from the centre regarded themselves as the spokespeople for their neighbourhood, and saw Better Beginnings, Better Futures, to some extent, as intruding on this role.

As the information for this cross-site report was being compiled, many of the sites were undergoing a major transition by hiring large numbers of staff for the project. Many of those hired are community residents. For example, one of the sites had recently hired seven community residents as family visitors. The report from another site indicated that residents hired by the

project felt they had lost their status as spokespersons for the community. Another report distinguished between “resident” and “non-resident” staff, indicating that there was something unique and special about being both a resident and a staff person. A number of communities described a situation of role conflict for residents who had become project staff: when is such a resident acting as staff and when as a community member?

The addition of significant numbers of new staff posed another problem as well. In some of the programs, residents were performing many of the tasks that newly hired staff would now be assigned. This meant that residents would have to relinquish some control over the project. This was noted in one of the sites during a visit by a government representative, who admonished:

... you’ve been a very dedicated group of people [but] get the staff to do more. Don’t give up control, but I’m wondering if you’re in a mode of still doing all the work yourself because you had to before...

Another problem that can occur when the staff complement of the project grows is that the project can take on a more bureaucratic or formal flavour. As a service provider from one of the sites stated:

...I think we’re going through a transition [with the hiring of new staff]... it will be, I think, fairly significant. With anything that happens, like getting new staff, there is an up side and a down side; staff can help but [they] also... change the nature of the project because it’s no longer an informal set of relationships and we take on some identity, which is good because then people can associate with it ...the down side is that we look like an agency possibly and people start responding to that perception...

Balance of Power

In the early phases of most of the seven projects, agency representatives outnumbered residents, and played a dominant role in terms of decision-making. This was often resented by residents, who felt that the agencies had “too much say” in what was happening. One report stated that this dominance by agency representatives:

...leads to a sense of being controlled, even if the system of making decisions by consensus allows all the stakeholders to express themselves and participate in making the decisions.

In one instance, this feeling led residents to meet outside of scheduled meetings, and created a breeding ground for mutual mistrust on both sides. In another project, a disagreement arose

between residents, project staff, and the agency that had been designated as the sponsoring agency over issues such as the administration of the project, the coordinator's salary, and the location of the site's offices. One consequence of this conflict was that the project considered incorporating on its own and leaving the sponsoring organization.

Power struggles also arose in some of the other sites. In one site, some of the residents who had been participating in the hiring of the project coordinator felt that the professionals on the hiring committee had made certain decisions, such as the selection of a short list of candidates, without resident input or agreement. Some of the individuals involved claimed that the resident members of the committee were mere "tokens" and that their opinions had not been seriously considered. To resolve this situation, more residents were invited to join the hiring committee, and the entire set of applications was reviewed by the reconstituted committee, and a new short list was drawn up.

In another community, relations between residents and service providers became strained when funding was allocated to the site. Prior to receiving funding, the residents association which had been instrumental in generating the successful site proposal had assumed that it would be the sponsoring agency when the funding was granted. Instead, funding was flowed through a social service agency and was controlled by a board composed mainly of professionals representing cooperating agencies. Residents saw this as removing control from them and diverting it to the agencies. This conflict brewed for over six months, until the coordinator, who had been newly hired, helped diffuse the conflict by speaking out on behalf of the residents:

I'm open to ideas and ready to listen. Don't think you have to protect me, I trust you to tell me, and I know and believe that what you say is sound. [The board needs] to accept the philosophy because this is a partnership. Agencies need to see the community perspective, and understand what the community thinks is important about their community... This Better Beginnings, Better Futures will only be successful if the community is involved, and you're the community, so they need you..

Conflicts were also resolved by empowering the residents: allowing residents to have lead roles in hiring program staff, making presentations at steering and work group meetings, chairing steering group meetings and coordinating site visits, and other activities. As time passed, more residents in most of the sites began to feel that a more equal partnership was developing between themselves, service providers and program staff. According to residents at one of the sites:

... I would say it's [the power balance] even...

... even though there's staff, they were hired by parents...

... we picked the resumes, we interviewed them and hired them...

... so I would say that [the equality in the relationship] is pretty good... in our favour...

... yeah, I would even say leaning a bit towards, I don't know if it's supposed to be like that, but leaning towards the residents, the community members...

... yeah, they (the professionals) pretty well go with what we want...

One occurrence which reportedly tipped the balance of power more in the favour of residents was that "leaders" began to emerge among the residents and these individuals became strong voices for the community. Another factor which was considered to have the effect of empowering residents in one of the communities was the use of a consensus approach to decision-making. Everyone around the table was encouraged to give an opinion before any decision was made. However, the risk of a breakdown in trust was always a possibility. As one site report described the situation:

It took decades for suspicion and mistrust to build, and they do not disappear in only two years. Neighbourhood participants will continue to challenge non-neighbourhood participants to make the theory of partnership a reality in which neighbourhood partners actually are respected, heard, and included.

Also, despite the efforts of the projects to empower community residents, some service providers still believed that they were in a position of greater power:

... the whole issue of equality... we are in a power position. Until the community really goes out there and becomes empowered there is always going to be that separation... hopefully from this project they will organize more...

One of the factors that some individuals saw as a deterrent to developing a more equal balance of power between residents and service providers was the influence of government on the projects. Some felt that the ministry's guidelines restricted the development of a partnership between service providers and community members in the projects. Indeed, some thought that the real inequity in Better Beginnings, Better Futures was between the government and the sites:

We all have an equal say and I think all pretty much want the same thing... Yes, I truly believe that, however, the Government has the final say and sometimes I think no matter what we want, it essentially comes down to what the Government wants. Isn't that an awful thing to believe?... Sometimes I think that the Government wants us to believe that we are running the show, but it's kind of like the way you handle men. You kind of let them think they're getting their own way but they're not, you know what I mean?

... I think [an equal partnership] is critical... pressures from Ministry really work against it... 'get through it quickly'...

In general, people at most sites believed that a true partnership can only develop over time, with a lot of hard work by all concerned:

We have really had to work hard to work together... if we had pushed things too fast it wouldn't have worked. We certainly have irritated each other at times, but we have been able to get beyond that... we have been challenging each others' culture.

[We service providers] have to change how we provide services, [make] paradigm changes [and] change roles and ways of thinking.

13.1 Discussion

Partnership - between community residents, service providers and site personnel - is a fundamental principle of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures project. There can be no dominant players. Residents and professionals need to merge their experiences and "know how" and learn to work together for these projects to do what was hoped. This has been a learning process fraught with suspicion, lack of familiarity and prejudice on both sides, particularly in the early stages of project development. While the challenges of working together have not been completely resolved, and there have been a few reversals along the way, it is clear that the partnership has become much more of a daily working reality at most sites. Certainly, many residents have learned new skills and become more assertive. Professionals too have made substantial efforts to modify their working procedures in order to cooperate with residents. Site staff are the newest members of this partnership. Nonetheless, with the amount of time they will be able to invest in project development, they will have a major impact, not only on what gets done, but on how other people do or do not work together. Also, as discussed earlier, the hiring

of large numbers of community residents at the sites is beginning to have an impact on the volunteer contributions of both residents and service providers.

The Better Beginnings, Better Futures initiative has two different expectations of the demonstration sites - to foster meaningful resident involvement and to integrate the efforts of an appropriate group of social service providers. The next challenge is clearly how well these different types of participants learn to work together. In addition, care will be required to make sure that volunteer contributions (either from residents or professionals) do not become marginalized as full-time players become more numerous and influential.

14.0 OUTCOMES

Participation in Better Beginnings, Better Futures produced a number of benefits. At this early stage in the programs' development, it appears to be the residents who are most involved in the projects who have derived the greatest benefits. Some of the sites are beginning to experience benefits at the community level. Participation does not come without a number of costs, however, especially in those communities where there are a relatively small number of residents who are taking on the major share of volunteer tasks.

14.1 Outcomes for Residents

Enhanced Self-Confidence

By far the most frequently mentioned benefit of participating in Better Beginnings has been an increase in confidence. Residents who are involved in their sites are asked to participate in a wide range of activities that they often have never experienced before: they attend (and sometimes chair) meetings with social service professionals; they plan programs; they interview candidates for staff positions and make decisions about who to hire; they make presentations to teachers, politicians, professionals and others. While residents find these activities intimidating at first, they often become more confident in these roles:

Before we didn't dare speak. We would look at each other and say: did you understand that? We did not dare ask a question, we trusted what was said, even when we thought we didn't understand. The coordinator tried to encourage us to ask our questions, he

would tell us to do it, but we wouldn't do it. Now, we feel more comfortable, we speak, and we say what we have to say.

It's made me a person. I'm not even shy as a mouse any more; I'm open.

I was quite a little mouse when this all started and now being involved in (Parents Program) and some of the committees I belong on, it's really funny, I can speak my piece.

It probably sounds silly, but by getting involved with all these big people, it made me not so shy, be more open.

I've become 100 percent more assertive. Seriously, like, I used to... let people walk all over me, but not any more at all.

... less shy... I talk more, maybe I talk too much. I mean, I am not so shy to go places... I speak out more.

The project has regenerated my self-esteem and confidence and I'm very happy about it.. .

I gained a lot of... self-confidence... increased knowledge of how this kind of an operation works, increased knowledge of government as well, new friends, contacts, and support.

The new confidence that residents feel is shown in many ways. Initially, residents would attend meetings, but didn't really participate fully. The field notes from many of the sites showed a marked change over time in the kind of participation that residents demonstrated. With time and encouragement, residents began to be more and more vocal in meetings, they proposed and seconded motions and resolutions, and they began to volunteer to perform new tasks, rather than waiting to be asked. This new-found self-confidence led to other benefits for the residents as well. One parent stated that her experiences in the project gave her the courage to go and look for work. Others began to think about going back to school:

Self-confidence... some of the parents who are involved on committees have also been persuaded... to join other committees outside of Better Beginnings, Better Futures project... for example, a committee on safe school environment... that I thought was good because it was a committee that involved a lot of higher echelon people, and she felt comfortable with that, with that type of involvement, but before that she wasn't. This really prepared her... she's even thinking about furthering her education.. .

One of the aspects that appeared to be most effective in building confidence was having residents speak to others on behalf of the project. Residents of the various sites were very active in making presentations to a variety of audiences. Residents made presentations to local and provincial government officials, community agencies, teachers and school trustees, and a host of others. For example, during a visit that government representatives made to one of the sites, it was a resident who explained to the government representative how their new coordinator had been hired. During that same visit, residents were active in discussions concerning modification of the territory covered by the project. As a service provider in one project described the situation:

People whose whole self-esteem had been bad or has been bruised and knocked down and no self-confidence are suddenly standing up in meetings and doing presentations... and talking very confidently about the project and what it has meant to them.

Self-Esteem

Hand-in-hand with increases in self-confidence, residents experienced pronounced changes in self-esteem. Several residents described how their participation in Better Beginnings, Better Futures made them feel more satisfied with their lives, and better about themselves generally:

I probably feel better about myself in the last year than I've ever felt about myself, ever, and that's because of the project.

I am really -- I am satisfied. I can honestly say that I am satisfied and I like what I do. And I haven't been for a long time.

To a large extent, this appeared to derive from the fact that residents were now speaking their minds, and felt listened to and respected for their opinions. For many, the opportunity to gain the attention and respect, not only of their peers, but of social service professionals, was a novel experience:

At the beginning, I was not hoping to get anything. It was just an outlet. I didn't think about getting a job out of it or anything like that... it's just a place to go that I didn't have to take a bus... But then, sitting on various committees and actually having... people seeming like they were listening to me, and I got my confidence 'cause I thought, I always knew I had a brain but it was dormant there for a while. It's true, yeah, and I started getting respect for the first time in a long time... people were actually listening to me.

People are actually listening to my opinion; they want my opinion. Before it was ‘who cares?’, but they actually come up to me and ask for my opinion and that really gives me self-esteem.

I like to feel heard, to feel important even though I’m on welfare... that I’m a person and that I have ideas too.

You don’t get respect from your kids, you got to get respect somewhere.

People in the community can see that people care about what they think... what we say makes a difference... that may not sound like a lot, but it is.

At the meetings, the community is heard and listened to, but also there is a response to what we’ve said from staff and fellow board members that are representing agencies... Community members are made to feel welcome and agency people are not agencies, but just like us.

Enhanced Social Contact and Support

Another major consequence of participation for many residents was the opportunity it offered to meet other residents. For some, the social contact offered by Better Beginnings, Better Futures was a way to meet new people, make friends, and have someone to do things with. This was important for some individuals who had recently moved to Canada:

...I’m new to this country, right, and I came out to this program, I’ve met a lot of new people...I met all these ladies who are so nice to me, and I call them my friends because I don’t have any relatives or friends, right, these are the people I like being with, so I look forward to the days, you know to come here. So, it’s very good for me...

[I like] ...the social aspect too,...I know so many more people now than I did when I started coming to this...

In one of the sites, the parent group which met regularly included a number of individuals from Southeast Asia, who formed strong relationships with one another and provided needed support to each other.

Social networks serve many functions. In addition to providing a social and recreational outlet, other residents can serve as a basis for comparison. As one resident stated:

What it shows you is that you are all in the same boat.

Other residents appreciated the fact that there were people that they could get advice from, or exchange ideas with. Some also saw their new friends as sources of help if the need arose:

I found out that I have more friends now that I can go to if I have a real emergency, I can give someone a call.

Respite

For many residents, one of the major outcomes of their participation was the ability to simply get out of the house. As one parent stated,

... before this program I used to just sit [and stare at the] wall...

Residents also appreciated the break that their participation allowed them from child care responsibilities. Several parents expressed appreciation for the opportunity to get relief from child care, or to share child care with other parents who were also attending Better Beginnings, Better Futures programs.

Enhanced Ability to Cope with Stress

The availability of social support and relief was described as having an impact on residents' ability to cope with stressful situations:

... has helped to get out and talk... to cope with things.

... helps you deal with your own problems instead of taking them out on other people.

... gives you more control over yourself and those around you.

Contact with Service Providers and Community Institutions

In addition to giving residents the opportunity to get to know their neighbours, Better Beginnings, Better Futures also brought residents into closer contact with many of the service providers and professionals who worked in their community. Importantly, this contact occurred on a very different basis than it had in the past. Formerly, residents interacted with service providers as the recipients of services; now, they were collaborating with service providers on a more equal basis. Consequently, residents were much less apprehensive about talking to these

individuals when a problem arose, and also had a better knowledge of how the various agencies and organizations in their communities operated:

I know better what not to be afraid of... all those big agencies.

This benefit of Better Beginnings, Better Futures was noted, in particular, in one of the school-age sites in which residents' involvement brought them into much closer contact with the neighbourhood school:

... there's a better relationship with the teachers.

... you have to know what is going on in the school because you're always around and you're talking with the kids...

... I like having a foot in the door at this school... You know what's going on in the school and you get to know the teachers face to face and they do recognize you, and I think that's good too...

Enhanced Skills and Knowledge

Residents involved in Better Beginnings, Better Futures said that they had learned a host of new skills through their participation in the project:

It's given me a chance to acquire new skills or enhance the ones I already had. Gave me a chance to maybe use them again and get a chance to brush them up a bit again.

A number of individuals who had recently emigrated to Canada said that Better Beginnings, Better Futures helped them learn the language of their new country and increase their vocabulary. Residents also mentioned other specific skills that they had acquired as a result of their involvement with the program, such as chairing meetings, or public speaking:

I've been allowed to blossom. I've been given new challenges and each challenge I've been able to learn a lot. One particular thing is the chance to do public speaking which I always had a phobia of doing any speaking. It's just terrified me up there. Now I'm at the point where I'm not only doing the public speaking, I [do many other things, as well].

Another parent talked about how her participation helped her as a parent:

I've got information that helped my family. I've become a much, much, much better parent and a person because of my involvement.

In addition to skills and knowledge, some residents appeared to gain a deeper insight into some of the broader social factors that had influenced their lives. As one of the site reports indicated:

Issues around gender equality and poverty have given some participants new perspectives by which to view their own situations, and, in some cases, make changes.

Jobs

Many of the residents who began as volunteers at the various sites were eventually employed by the sites in a variety of capacities. They took on jobs as home visitors, research assistants, teacher's aids, and many other kinds of positions on the project. For some, this was a source of some much needed income, but for many, their employment on the project was also recognition of their personal growth:

I've got a job and it's a step forward for my family and I...

In addition to providing income, both the paid and the unpaid volunteer jobs with the projects provide residents with skills and experiences that are seen as leading to jobs outside the project at a later point in time.

Benefits to Children

Many of the residents who became involved with their community's Better Beginnings, Better Futures projects did so because they wanted to provide more activities and a better life for their children. Parents found that their children were experiencing many of the same benefits that they had experienced themselves:

... this is somewhere to go and, while I get to socialize, my son gets to do the same thing as well...

... it's very good for me, and my kids, they have new friends too..."

... it's very good because... my child get familiar too, before she joins the Kindergarten class... I had [my daughter] at home and she barely speaks, just a couple words, her vocabulary was so small, and you should hear her now, she is doing very very good, so I think it's very good for her...

[It's] good for the kids to have other adults to talk to...

A number of parents indicated that they appreciated the fact that they and their children could be involved in the program together:

My children have fun there. I can share with my children.

Several residents also mentioned that their children are proud of the fact that their parents are involved in planning Better Beginnings, Better Futures, and that their involvement helps enhance their children's feelings of self-worth:

But doesn't it make your kids feel good?... don't you find?... because I know (my child) is very proud... because he thinks his mom knows everybody... he'll tell kids in the school, oh, well my mom knows, she calls [the principal by her first name]... It's really a big deal... so it's given him confidence too...

... the (older) kids like to see that their parents are there and that they care, that means a lot to them, even though they may not come out and say it...

In some instances, parents indicated that their children's behaviour had improved, and that this improvement had helped enhance the parents' emotional state as well:

[How has the program] changed me? Well, I guess because of the way it changed the kids. They were just crazy, wild tantrums, screaming, they were out of control and then coming here and meeting more and more, and being with other kids they have calmed down a lot and there isn't the screaming that used to happen... I'm a lot calmer.

Outcomes for Projects

In all the sites, residents were seen as crucial to the development of sound programs. In many communities, it was felt that many of the programs would have never got off the ground without resident input:

They [residents] feel a little more for the project... than people who are just working there .. It's probably moved a lot faster... The home visitors wouldn't have anywhere to go if parents weren't involved... The project would flop because the parents wouldn't have anything to do with it ...

Residents also played a key role in other aspects of program development. They participated in hiring program staff. They helped make decisions about the location of neighbourhood centres and programs. They brought other residents out for programs and events. One of their most important contributions was their knowledge of their community and what kind of program was likely to work in that community. As one report stated:

Community residents are experts in knowing what will work and what will not.

Another impact that residents had on the project concerned their effect on the professionals with whom they collaborated. While service providers were, of course, used to interacting with

individuals from the neighbourhood, they were often unaccustomed to working with residents in such a collaborative, equal manner. This kind of collaboration required just as much learning and accommodation on the part of the professionals as it did on the part of the residents:

I would say that it's not been really a rocky road, but there's been a give and take one way and another. It's very hard for a lot of us people [i.e., service providers] who are used to sitting down in meetings to shut up... we always talk and yak on and get ourselves all excited about it... but find now we are slowing down a bit and they're speeding up a bit and so we're coming together.

The collaboration between service providers and residents also tended to slow the process of decision-making down. In part, this occurred because of turnover of residents (and sometimes service providers) on the various steering and working groups. The need to orient new group members required a revisiting of the project's goals and history. New group members also needed time to become accustomed to the way in which the group operated and decisions were made. This was not necessarily seen as a drawback. Indeed, the opposite process of parachuting outside professionals into the project was perceived as:

... going to work in the short term but that is certainly not going to do very well in the long run... so slowing down is one thing... that I don't see as very negative in the long run.

Outcomes for Communities

The involvement of community residents in Better Beginnings, Better Futures produced a range of outcomes at the community level. Some sites were just beginning to reach out to other members of the community. Consequently, there was as yet limited awareness of the project in the community-at-large. There was a consciousness that community development is a time-consuming task, and that there would be difficulties in building awareness for the program, especially in neighbourhoods with high rates of turnover:

... I think this community awareness takes a long time... Our parents still don't know what's going on in the community...

... There's still a lot of parents who don't know. Revolving door - a lot of people moving in and out...

Some communities, however, had spent a great deal of time and effort building awareness of the project and increasing resident participation. In one of the sites, the Better Beginnings,

Better Futures project had worked at establishing a presence in the community, through summer carnivals, presentations to public and civic organizations, and other events. Consequently, over 50 articles about the project had appeared in local newspapers, often on the front page of these publications.

Building a Sense of Community

While resident participation in Better Beginnings, Better Futures has varied from site to site, many of the communities have begun to see effects of this participation at the community level. Residents who are involved in the projects were beginning to develop a “sense of community”:

I really think before this was in place it was pockets of people... I think the neighbourhood is now starting to think of itself as a community and I don't think it was doing that before.

This developing sense of community was particularly noted in some of the sites which included a diverse mix of ethnic and cultural groups. At one of the sites, for example, a potluck supper had been organized, but had had a relatively low turnout. While project staff were disappointed about the turnout, resident organizers were delighted at the fact that the people who had come were from different ethnic areas of the site which had rarely mixed before. As one resident described them, these community celebrations, organized largely by residents, had brought:

People from different ethnic and cultural groups together to share food and space; and areas within neighbourhoods are coming together.

This mixing of ethnic and cultural groups has, for the most part, been positive. Residents generally have been pleased about the kinds of contacts that they have had with other groups in the community. One service provider, for example, related how a woman who had been meeting children from other ethnic groups told the service provider how polite and well-behaved the children were, and how much she appreciated the values of that group.

Community Action

Some of the Better Beginnings, Better Futures communities have experienced changes that were the result of residents coming together to take action for needed services and programs. In

one site, residents organized to get a four-way stop at an intersection where two children had been killed. Another community saw the reopening of a park which had been closed due to a lack of security which then became a hub of recreational activities in the area. As an agency representative at one of the sites stated:

One of the biggest things that... neighbourhood people have learned is the value and effectiveness of political action and advocacy, especially at the local levels.

The fact that residents are now associated with a recognizable and respected community organization has meant that residents are now listened to more seriously by other agencies and organizations that operate in the community. One resident described this new-found attentiveness as follows:

I find it easier to call, let's say, _____, if you have a problem, and they'll listen. Before it would take six months to get them to respond basically to you. But I found that agencies are more willing to be involved, more willing to come out and try and help out with stuff than they were before.

Self-Help

One of the key elements of any neighbourhood development project is self-help. It was hoped that Better Beginnings, Better Futures would act as a catalyst, providing residents with a means of working together to help themselves. There was some evidence, at this early stage of the program's development, that this was occurring. In one of the sites, discussions in the parent group made people aware that many residents were experiencing or had experienced domestic violence. This led to the formation of a domestic violence support group. This kind of self-initiated process to deal with a need felt by residents was also reported by a service provider working in another Better Beginnings, Better Futures community:

[Residents are] starting to realize they might be able to deal with some of the problems from within.

14.2 Negative Outcomes

The participation of community residents in the development of Better Beginnings, Better Futures projects at the various sites did not occur without certain costs. While the great majority of individuals involved talked about their personal growth as a result of their participation, they

also contributed substantial amounts of time and made a strong emotional commitment to the project. The commitment of time and energy often meant that other aspects of their lives had to suffer to some extent.

Time Away From Children

The great majority of individuals who participated in the various Better Beginnings, Better Futures sites were mothers. The reality at most sites was that there were relatively few mothers who took on a great many roles in the project. They were asked to participate in meetings of steering, work and program groups; they provided child care; they interviewed prospective job candidates; they reviewed questionnaires and reports; they developed programs. In addition, they often volunteered to work on the various programs and events, cooking food, attending information booths, and the like. All of this required huge amounts of time. The major complaint of many of these mothers was that their commitment to Better Beginnings, Better Futures was taking time away that they would have spent with their children:

My children resented my time away from them because they were so used to me being at home.

Some parents were complaining that because of the programs there was not enough time for them to spend with their children.

They don't give you time to spend time with your family.

... take a lot of flak from [my children] because I'm always out ... They've been a little mad at me at times for not being at home as much as they are used to. They were used to having their mum here 24 hours a day and she was always here and they knew that. And I didn't have a life and they like it that way, you know ... Really, that's not negative. But my daughter thinks that it's a negative.

Indeed, many of the mothers, because they were so busy attending meetings, were not able to participate with their children in the programs that were designed for parents and children to do things together:

... The kids are there (in the Family Resources Centre) now ... which is fine... but... the purpose of that particular program ... [is] supposed to be... parent and child... interaction and... so the kids are missing out, too, overall in a sense... They're there but they're not participating in the type of program that is supposed to be... with you...

Stress and Burnout

Another consequence of the large amount of time that individuals were asked to spend on the project was a feeling of being stressed and pressured. A number of residents who were doing a large proportion of the work on the projects began to talk about stress and burnout:

Our core group of parents are overextended and the new parents are just getting their feet wet... I'm steering them to committees but they're not comfortable yet..

... you know, sometimes, some days you can do it all and some days you just can't..

Sometimes it does take up too much time. I guess in the winter time at one time I was pretty burnt out. I just got really tired.

If you're not careful, it could take up too much time.

Once you start going people automatically think you'll volunteer more.

Feelings of Frustration and Inadequacy

While many residents indicated that they had felt listened to and appreciated for the contributions they made during meetings, this was not everyone's experience. At times, especially in the early phases of the projects' development, residents did not feel that they were being heard. Rather than enhancing their feelings of self-esteem and self-worth, this led to feelings of inadequacy. As one parent stated: "I'm just a parent". Another described the situation in the early stage of the program's development in the following manner:

Nobody really listened ... it was just all talk ... nobody really cared what we had to say.

People got tired of waiting for decisions to be made on such things as the location of the site office and the hiring of more staff.

Dissatisfaction of Partners

Women comprised the vast majority of residents who participated in the planning and development of the various Better Beginnings, Better Futures projects. As mentioned earlier, many of these women experienced significant gains in self-confidence and independence. These gains in self-sufficiency at times appeared to have adverse affects on the women's relationships with

their partners. A number of women reported that they were pressured by their partners to end their involvement. One woman reported that her partner “hassled” her all the time about her involvement. A number of the Site Reports suggested that the personal growth experienced by women involved in the project represented a threat to their male partners’ power and dominance. Two of the Site Reports suggested that this might result in a threat to the safety of the mother and/or her children, and, indeed, may serve to increase levels of abuse in the short term.

Divisions in the Community

One of the major goals of Better Beginnings, Better Futures is to bring communities together, to build a “sense of community” among the various individuals and groups within the neighbourhood. While there was evidence that Better Beginnings, Better Futures did, indeed, enhance feelings of togetherness and unity in the community, there were some instances in which the presence of the project produced divisions, as well. One site, for example, witnessed a division in the community between those who were involved in the project and those who were not involved. The Site Report described a situation in which participants and their children were perceived as belonging to an elite group. One mother said that this had even had an impact on her child’s friendships; the child was shunned by friends whose parents were not involved in the project. Residents at other sites described similar occurrences:

You get a lot of flak from your neighbours ... you’re a rat for being involved.

Some see you differently (as not one of them).

Another source of division within the community was the competition for jobs with the project. Two of the Site Reports indicated that the competition for jobs produced feelings of apprehension and disillusionment in unsuccessful applicants, and feelings of jealousy towards successful job candidates. One of the residents expressed this as follows:

I am sure there has been some jealousy ... especially having hired people from the community ... I am sure there are others that believe they should have got jobs and that sort of thing.

14.3 Discussion

The evidence from all of the sites indicates that most resident and professional respondents thought that residents who were involved in Better Beginnings, Better Futures experienced substantial personal growth as a direct result of their involvement. This growth was manifested in many different ways, and was produced by any number of different aspects of their involvement. This was expressed very clearly by some of the residents:

I think it is different for everybody, but I think for some people, there is the real personal growth, and that personal growth might be self-esteem, the personal growth might be knowledge or skills... I think that people get a sense of having given to something and that feels good, not really self-esteem, just a feeling that you have contributed. They get out of their house. I think some people have got off drugs and drinking too. One person's ability to cope is like night and day improved... Knowing you can do something and do it well.

Better Beginnings has been an amazing avenue for building my own self-esteem. It has given me new insight into program development, the hiring process and boards and their workings. I have also managed to take a semi-negative view of my community (especially my neighbourhood) and turn it into something positive. By doing this, I now find my neighbourhood an enjoyable place to live where a broad range of people have shown that we all can co-exist despite our many differences.

The kind and degree of benefit that residents experienced appeared to relate to the type and level of their involvement. Those individuals who participated in the planning and development of programs as members of steering and working groups, who were hired as program staff, or who had spoken on behalf of their project to outside audiences were the ones who appeared to derive the greatest benefit. Individuals who were less substantially involved, for example, by attending one of the projects' programs also reported benefits, but to a lesser extent.

Resident participation brought a number of negative as well as positive outcomes. Many of these negative outcomes are associated with the large amounts of time that are required from active residents. While these residents appear to derive the greatest benefit, they also experience stress, burnout, and remorse at not being able to spend more time with their children. In addition, involved parents at times suffer the resentment of their partners and of other members of the community who are not involved in the project. One possible way of circumventing these negative

outcomes is to work for a wider and more substantial involvement of community residents, and the inclusion of partners in program activities.

15.0 CONCLUSIONS

By the fall of 1992, almost all of the seven demonstration sites had made substantial gains in involving community residents in creating and maintaining the Better Beginnings, Better Futures projects. This was the result of a great deal of effort by many people at each site. Much is being learned, often through trial and error, as the projects develop. The challenge of involving residents in these primary prevention projects is proving to be very complex. It is also a challenge that continues to evolve as the requirements of the demonstration projects become more sophisticated. Among other things, our ways of thinking about resident involvement in these projects have to be able to incorporate the following realities:

- residents participate as volunteers, as staff and as representatives of other service organization;
- residents contribute on boards/steering committee, sub-committees, program development groups, by volunteering for specific program and administrative tasks, and by participating in program activities;
- the total number of residents volunteering varies greatly from site to site and it is not yet clear what an optimum number of resident volunteers would be nor is it clear where it is most important for residents to be involved;
- there are different views at the sites about who should be involved on key decision-making bodies, ranging from twice as many residents as professionals, to equal numbers of residents and professionals, to equal numbers of residents, professionals and staff;
- hiring of residents is becoming a major way for residents to influence the projects and is changing the nature of volunteer resident involvement;
- there is a need to balance resident participation with that of service providers as well as staff and to develop a practical and respectful partnership among residents, external service providers and project staff;
- sites are still struggling with the issue of what groups in the community should be represented in their decision-making processes and how to make this a reality;

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- residents have many different motives for participating in the projects and not all residents are seeking the same kinds of involvement;
 - as the demonstration sites become more complex in terms of their administration, staffing and programs, the ways residents will be able to influence the projects are likely to change;
 - there are many barriers making resident involvement difficult to initiate and to sustain. In particular, the obstacles to involving adequate numbers of males and members of minority groups remain strong in these projects;
 - different methods and different levels of enthusiasm seem to have been brought to involving resident of the seven sites. It is not yet clear how much cross-site learning about “what works” can take place;
 - participation in demonstration project development at the sites has produced many positive outcomes for residents and needs to be understood as a valuable method of “helping” in its own right;
 - there are personal and family strains associated with being an active volunteer which can produce negative outcomes for some participants.

The positive news is that progress is being made at these seven demonstration sites in many ways. Nonetheless, questions continue to emerge as resident involvement grows and it is still far from clear how all the pieces will fit together. What is clear is that the good work being done in involving residents in the Better Beginnings, Better Futures Primary Prevention Demonstration Project deserves to be acknowledged. We hope that this report communicates our respect for these efforts and our appreciation for the magnitude of the challenge being undertaken.

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