



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

It Begins at Home: City Efforts to Strengthen Families & Transform Neighborhoods
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Speakers:

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Martin Bell, Deputy to the Superintendent of Schools, Louisville, Kentucky
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Kyle: My name is John Kyle with the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families at the National League of Cities. Welcome to our conference call on strengthening families. We have three great speakers with us today, to participate in the conversation. We have Jane Henegar, who is the Deputy Mayor in Indianapolis, Indiana, Marty Bell with the Superintendent of School's Office in Louisville-Jefferson County, Kentucky, and Bill Shepardson here in Washington at the Technical Assistance Resource Center, providing assistance to dozens of cities across the country.

I'd like to talk about what we mean by strengthening families in the context of what a city government and community leaders might do. Jane, you've been working with your mayor, Bart Peterson, and been leading some efforts on strengthening families in Indianapolis. What does it mean in the context of what your policies are?

Henegar: We've thought a lot about "what is family strengthening." Our jumping off point has been our work with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and they've put a lot of thought into it. They define it by its "making connections:" helping families make connections to formal supports, informal supports, and economic opportunities. So we've, in turn, taken our policies from that point. What does it mean for a family -- how does it help strengthen a family to connect to the services that we provide on the local level, whether it's trash pickup, whether it's providing affordable housing, or work force development assistance? The same with economic opportunities. How can we, as a city, help families strengthen themselves and other families in their community through economic development, again, work force development, etc? And informal supports -- the ways that cities can help communities feel like a community, through community policing, helping people feel like their streets are safe, or through our support of neighborhood associations. Those are just some of the general ways.

Kyle: Marty, can you add on to that, especially from the point of view of what family strengthening means in terms of schools?

Bell: We're Jefferson County-Louisville, Kentucky, a community of about a million. One school system within the county, so the school system has the opportunity to partner with the city government, county government, and other agencies in supporting families, so a lot of what we do, we do very collaboratively. We've got a rich history of being able to work through that. With the concept of strengthening families, our general goal and effort is to help families become self sufficient so the family has the support mechanisms and so forth so they can handle issues themselves that might arise in the family. We look at it from an education perspective, a social service perspective, and from a health perspective. Our efforts have been trying to bring services together, to eliminate duplication and provide support to families, as they are needed, community-by-community. We have a large number of neighborhood associations and groups in our community, and a lot of what we try to do is design our programs to fit those general geographic areas. Probably one of the things that we're very heavy into, and it's come as a result of evolution through the process, is that we're very much focused on providing data to the communities and data to the service providers so that they have a better understanding about what the issues are in the community, as it relates to families, and that way when they're working on solutions, they can be looking at solutions that support all of the issues, not just a single issue that they might want to concentrate on.

Kyle: Bill, you've been working with providing some assistance to 22 cities at least, but perhaps even more. Do these examples, Louisville and Indianapolis, seem in common, in sync with what you're seeing in other cities? With what a definition of family strengthening means in the context of what cities are doing these days?

Shepardson: I think Jane and Marty really hit the nail on the head, that the Foundation's interest has been in figuring out ways that a broad array of folks in communities around the country can really help connect families to economic opportunity and to the supports and the kinds of networks Jane was talking about, that helps support their ability to work and to be self sufficient and take care of themselves, as Marty suggested. We've found in all 22 cities, city and county government and the schools have really stepped up to the challenge of thinking about what their citizens really want for all families across the community, and thinking about the resources they control and the services they provide and how to target them in ways that overcome those disconnections.

Kyle: Let's talk even more specifically, Marty and Jane, about what's been going on in your cities. When you talk about partnering, Marty, between the education system, the school system, and the local government, can you give some individual particular examples of what that means and how it's working?

Bell: Probably several different ones, and you probably don't want a long oration, but one of them is a center that we call Neighborhood Place. It is community based, and what it provides is health, education, human resources, in a single location, and where the counselors and social workers and educational staff are co-located and working with families in concert, trying to reduce that family's barriers to being successful. They also try to bring in support -- if there's a member of the family that needs to be employed that's not employed, get them into the employment. Neighborhood Place is an example of where the agencies are partnering, and we're

co-locating resources. Instead of bouncing families around from location to location, we put all the staff in a single location. We've got eight different locations within the community.

Kyle: How many of those kinds of locations are there?

Bell: We have eight of those set up throughout the community, and we tried to do it basically so that it was cost neutral. We used the existing staff -- it was not new staff -- for each of the programs. It is not a new program in that there is no new employer -- each organization has its own employees located at a common place, and we work out confidentiality agreements so that you can work with a family and you can know what their medical history is and you can know what their experience has been with social services, and you can know what their experience has been with the school district, so that the workers who are working can talk to each other and look for a solution, instead of doing it in a silo effect. They do it in a collaborative effect.

The Casey Foundation has been very supportive with what's referred to as a family-to-family project, which is, I'm assuming, a number of people, but it helps with the counseling and the better cooperation among staff with the local family to reduce barriers to family success. For us, as a school district, when you reduce barriers for family success, you're reducing barriers for kids learning.

Kyle: You mentioned the confidentiality agreements back and forth so you could share information. Just in a process sense, was that difficult? How did you make that happen and work so that a health department -- a social service department -- could share with the education folks?

Bell: To be blunt, when we started, it was like climbing Mount Everest. We asked attorneys to help us solve the problem for the various agencies. What we found was we had to get policy makers sitting with the attorneys in a room to address these legal issues. If you talk through them, you can get through them. So we came up with a very simple, one page agreement that each of the partnering boards approved, and so our board of education approved it, the city council approved it, the county commissioners approved it. When a family comes in for services, the family simply signs, acknowledging that the partners are going to work together. Early on, those of us that were sitting in our agencies thought well, families will never sign these things, etc., and we have found probably less than one percent of the population refused to sign the agreement that lets the various agencies work together to help the family and provide the shared information. So it's something that I think agencies sometimes think is a bigger obstacle than it really is. But it does take policy makers working with attorneys to work through that. I'm probably being more candid than I should about that, but that's the way you've got to get it done.

Kyle: I just anticipated that being the question that somebody would ask in our audience, so that's why I wanted to push it a little bit. Jane, you wanted to get in here?

Henegar: Yes, I just wanted to say that I don't think we can underestimate the significance of what Marty has just described. When we think about how to provide services more effectively for families, what are the barriers that are erected and what is it that is preventing

families from being more successful? Some of those barriers are of our own construction, but they often seem insurmountable. Anyone who is listening who is familiar with social services knows that the issue of confidentiality and assuming that some legal issues are insurmountable has stopped a lot of innovation. But I think what they've done in Louisville is to just trudge through and say it seems right, it seems logical, it's in the best interests of families and we've just got to figure out a way, and they have. I think there are lots of barriers like that, that we've sometimes maybe erected for ourselves, that if we can look beyond, we can find that there's actually a solution. But it takes a lot. In Indianapolis, we've visited Louisville and their Neighborhood Places, to learn some lessons for a similar effort we're trying to undertake. It's very encouraging to see that they've been able to remove some of the barriers that they have. But, I'll tell you, it's taken a lot of work on their part and a lot of diligence and persistence.

Kyle: Can you follow up a little bit, Jane, with what you would consider a significant effort that is a particular program or strategy that, in Indianapolis, you're proud of that you're working towards. Not the process side, but the making connections -- where is that coming out? What could I see, or what could a family experience in Indianapolis right now about "making connections?"

Henegar: That's a challenge because a lot of ours, up to now, has been what lots of people would say is process oriented. We're now working on some tangible programs that have been borne of those partnerships that have come from the process. We have established about a year and a half, two years ago, a family strengthening coalition, and we've had family strengthening summits. Our last one, November of 2001, was attended by 1,000 neighborhood providers, mostly residents, and a lot of children. I think maybe 30 or 40 percent of them were children. Out of that, we've been able to forge partnerships, and then as we look to see what are the specific programs, what do we need to change? Our partners have been big institutional partners like United Way and our local community foundation. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has been very supportive, as have our community centers and neighborhood associations.

One example that we've begun is to create family investment centers. It will be different from Neighborhood Places in Louisville because every community is different, but the idea is to create a place on the neighborhood level where people can get the services they need, and we're going to ask them to define what those services are. We're partnering with the state Family and Social Services Administration in Indiana. They take care of family and children services, aging rehabilitative services, as well as substance abuse and mental health issues. We've also brought along work force development and the state department of health. The idea is to reinvent our services in a way that actually meets the needs of families per their direction. So we've begun that. We've kicked off a big earned income tax credit campaign, and there are lots of communities across the country that have done that. We're hoping to go to scale countywide -- our city is the same as our county boundaries -- city and countywide next year, bringing in millions of dollars for Indianapolis families. When you put that into the economic mix for families, and we're coupling it with financial literacy programs so that it's not just a one-time infusion, the earned income tax credit return can help them see the way that they can build for the future through savings and other financial tools.

Kyle: Bill, in other cities or from the Casey Foundation's other experiences, what are you seeing as the kinds of signature efforts that cities are utilizing to expand on, develop a family strengthening agenda?

Shepardson: We're seeing a lot of similar work to what Jane and Marty described in the other cities. I think Jane's point that the process stuff that you begin with is pretty important in getting you to the point where you can put in place program strategies that really are responsive to the needs of residents of neighborhoods is an important one that can't be discounted. All 22 cities started there, thinking about policy development and working backwards from what a vibrant neighborhood would look like and what strong families would look like, and what leverage they had to make those changes. They are now getting to the point where a lot of the cities are focusing on their role in helping families do better economically, and that means helping families connect to jobs, whether that be through the sort of neighborhood centers Jane described or other strategies that link with regional efforts that are going on through job creation. There is a lot of work around asset development.

Thirteen of the 22 cities put in place Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) campaigns last year that got a lot of money back into the pockets of families, and did it in a way linked with helping families think about saving that money, and investing it for their futures. There is also a lot of work going on around the schools and around building stronger neighborhood schools that residents have a role, both in designing what their school should be like and then in the management and running the school, so that schools can focus both on making sure kids succeed academically, and on being an institution that contributes to neighborhood and community life.

It's interesting we're sort of hearing back from the city of the three different kinds of connections that the Foundation was sort of positing, if you paid attention to them, kids would be better off. We're hearing from residents themselves and from city and county government and their partners that this whole idea of connecting families to economic opportunity is really important. It resonates very well, but there are ways in which you then think about the social services that support families' ability to work, and this notion of informal social networks, so that if you need a lift to work or you need somebody to watch your kids after school, you know people that can do that. We're seeing those sorts of efforts as well.

Kyle: The Foundation has been working with some key cities around the country, a couple thousand of them. A lot of the folks listening on the call today are not from one of those cities, so they're not getting the full, unvarnished but also very deep and broad support to explore lots of different ideas, and are trying to grab hold of this call as one step toward taking an initiative in their community. Where do any one of the three of you think is a good place to start, maybe something that pre-dates your work with Casey, or cities you worked with that are either outside of the Casey loop or before there was a Casey loop to be part of. Where do you start, especially if you're not a million people in a mass? Where do you start to say I want to deal with family strengthening, what are some things I could do?

Shepardson: Oddly enough, the Casey Foundation's effort here has been a little different than traditional foundation efforts. It has not involved a lot of money and a lot of traditional investment on the part of the foundation. I think some of the things the foundation has worked with cities like Indianapolis and Louisville to do is sort of point in the direction of how you get

this started. But it's been a lot of getting people to sit down and talk about what needs to be different for families and neighborhoods. It's a lot of the work that Marty and Jane referred to, of gathering the right information about current conditions so that people can make informed decisions to change those, and it's a lot about learning about best practice and promising practices in other places, all of which takes some resources but it's not sort of the traditional thing where a foundation backs up a truck full of money and puts it on the table and says, "Here's an initiative, we're going to invest in it."

Henegar: I'd agree. Money always helps but I agree that hasn't been the Foundation's approach. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has put a lot of thought, as I said earlier, into what family strengthening means, but that did not negate the need for us, in Indianapolis, to engage in that same discussion because we had to come to that conclusion ourselves. What does that mean? We came to the same conclusions that that means families are healthy and safe and families are financially secure and engaged in each other's lives and engaged in the community. That discussion has made people think about what they do differently, and that requires a lot of time and that requires a lot of will because those conversations can be very frustrating. But you've got to work through them in order to get to the other side, but they don't take a lot of money. I think when once you've all come to the conclusion we have common purposes, and in Indianapolis, the mayor doesn't have any direct control on the public school system. We have some Charter A school authority, but that's totally separate. However, the successes of schools have a huge impact on the quality of life in the City of Indianapolis. How the schools fare matters very much. Thinking about what it is that makes families strong, thinking about what it is that makes the educational process a success for children reflects back on okay, then where is our role.

Once you start engaging that conversation, it becomes very evident that you do have a role to play, whether you're the police and it means making people feel safe in their community, making police partners for the residents and not adversaries, or whether it means coming up with some innovative ways to involve the community in picking up trash, not only to get neighborhoods clean but to create a sense of community, to prevent littering and property devaluation to begin with. A lot of that, I would agree with Bill, is not money intensive, but can be time intensive.

Kyle: Is it fair to say, Bill and Jane, that you are suggesting naming an additional goal for a particular activity you're already doing? Name it family strengthening, and then once you name it, that one of our goals for trash pickup is family strengthening, well then, how do I do that? Is that fair? It seems pretty simple, but is part of the equation here thinking about traditional services in a new way, with a new goal?

Henegar: I would say absolutely. Sometimes the goals aren't new, it's just recognizing or rediscovering the goals. Going back to Marty's example about the confidentiality, you know sometimes things like that can take on so much importance that you begin to think that protecting confidentiality is the goal. Well, that's something that has to be considered, but you're providing a service in order to get a family to a position where they can be healthy or that they can be financially secure and independent. Confidentiality is part of that process, but it's not the goal. Serving the families and making families and children successful is the goal. I think this process

allows you to look at anything you do across the community and recognize that it fits in because it helps families succeed in this way or in that way.

Shepardson: I completely agree that that sort of conversation Jane described, as difficult as it is, brings people to consensus around what family strengthening means. Mapping that to the work they already do gave a lot of the cities we've been working with a lot of traction to take advantage of the things they were already doing or of existing initiatives under way. Just taking a fresh look at them, making sure they had the right partners, and that they were doing the work they were doing in ways that really met needs identified by residents. So, in Des Moines, they had a neighborhood-based service delivery initiative that was targeting poor neighborhoods. They just took a step back and really thought about the extent to which they were talking with folks in those neighborhoods and they had other partners at the table who maybe weren't city service deliverers, but who could, in partnership with the city, help meet some of the needs identified by the residents so that the long term goal was not better trash pickup, but it was a better, stronger neighborhood and families that were more prepared to raise their kids.

Bell: Talking around all this, and it's been hit upon a couple of times, but back to the data and the importance of good data and so forth, I'd like to talk a little bit about Casey. Casey is working with the local community, and one of the projects right now that they have taken on, and it's not taking a lot of money but it's taking a little, is helping get better data about neighborhoods. I'm a believer, and most of us who have partnered together are believers that if we've got good data that really tell us something, we can motivate folks to want to do something about it, whatever the issues might be. About the third or fourth year we were in the Neighborhood Place, we implemented a project that was referred to as a Community Assessment and Planning Project. We went out to the eight Neighborhood Places. We took a lot of demographic data about each of those eight Neighborhood Place locations, sat down with the community and the community councils, and said here's data about your community. It was everything from educational data to health data to child abuse data to quality of home data. It was a broad spectrum of data about the community, and we said, "Okay community, now let's have a conversation and let's work on what we ought to target, because we can't do all these things." That makes some people nervous because if you're not focused on their issue or their data, then they get nervous because we may lose that as a priority, and therefore not fund their program. But when you throw all that data out there, it then helps the community decide what they need to do, what we need to do to strengthen families in that community. So each of our Neighborhood Places, as a result of that, established different agendas. They didn't all look alike. They each came up with their plan and so forth about what they wanted to do for their community, to help strengthen it. Casey is doing something similar to that. They brought together a group of folks and they're bringing together data, into a -- I'll call it a data warehouse but it's a data system -- where smaller communities than the eight Neighborhood Places, smaller geographic areas will be able to look at the information for their community and so forth.

We're also working, and this is a very exciting project we're working on. We're partnering with a number of after school programs, programs that occur outside the school day. They're run by community-based organizations like the YMCA, the Parks Department, the Boys and Girls Club, the Urban League, and so forth. We're collecting data from those programs on participation by students. Then what we are doing is we are giving them, for participating in our project, we are giving back information about how their kids are doing. We're doing it in an

aggregate form so that they know what percentage of their kids are getting C's and what percentage are getting B's and what percentage of the kids scored novice and what percentage missed x-number days of school. But again, we're using that confidentiality agreement and we've got them to sign so we can provide that after school provider more detailed information about individual students. For example, I'll pick the Boys and Girls Club. One of their kids is only attending school 80 percent of the time, but attending the Boys and Girls Club 100 percent of the time. There's a disconnect there and the Boys and Girls Club needs to help get that child in school because that's a potential drop out. So it's a case of using data. We're fortunate a number of our funders in town are now asking programs to provide more data about what the results are, and to get out of the anecdotal, "We helped this family," and to get into "we can show that we can make a difference in lives and here's the data." What that will also help us do is strengthen programs and eliminate duplication.

Kyle: Just a follow up on the data piece, Jane and Marty, schools traditionally have lots of data. City governments, especially in their planning and zoning departments have lots of data. Are you finding, in your two experiences, that the folks who have that, who are responsible for collecting it and responsible for using it, are willing to talk to each other? You were talking about a situation in Louisville -- beyond whether there was a little bit of money to help stir the pot a bit, are the actual folks beginning to recognize that this is important and valuable and are interested in doing it, or are you finding similar issues of process like with confidentiality, that it requires some sitting down, and what techniques worked, if that were the case?

Henegar: We've been very fortunate in Indianapolis to have a wonderful data collection process. Where our challenges come is making that user friendly to everyone and, as Marty suggested, getting it in the hands of the residents so they can join in the decision-making. It has been a goal but it's been a challenge in getting that translation. It's been more labor intensive and required more of an intermediary than we would like. The end goal would be to make the reservoir of information available to as many people as possible. We haven't been posed with the barrier of accessibility from any legal or formal sense. It's been more of an inherent challenge of technology -- how do you get a rich source and make it mineable by as many people as possible.

Kyle: I want to ask the panel to think about a variety of other municipal departments. Since this is the National League of Cities, I want to try to keep municipal leadership and local government leadership a part of the equation here. Think about other common parts of local government and the roles you've been seeing them play. For example, could the Parks and Recreation Department be a player in what you're doing? Bill, you've seen lots of cities, so tell us whether you think a Parks and Recreation Department has a role to play and what kinds of examples you have seen of that.

Shepardson: I can't be as specific as Jane and Marty on some of this stuff because my role is often brokering helper assistance and learning to the sites, but I know that in a handful of the sites, they are thinking about making sure that there are safe and nice, accessible, fun spaces for people to gather and commune with each other in communities. I've worked with the Parks and Recreation Department. I think Louisville might be one of those places where settlement houses and other neighborhood institutions have been working with the city to really think about making

sure that families feel free and safe to congregate with each other, and that kids have a safe place to play after school. A lot of the neighborhoods we're working in as well, where people are working on the community school issues, Parks and Recreation has played a big role in thinking about after school opportunities for kids that are fun but also help with their development.

Kyle: In Louisville or Indianapolis is there a Parks and Rec role, and I bring up that department specifically because most every city and town in the country has got a Parks and Rec Department and often it's challenging to figure out how they stood into some of these outcomes that cities are looking for.

Bell: The answer is yes. We work with Parks and Rec's in a number of areas, and that is one of the roles that we're trying to alter, adjust or modify or re-think, in dealing with Parks and Recreation. Traditionally, at least in this community, Parks and Recreation has provided a lot of activities after school and in the summer and so forth, for kids, which provided a way for them to be cared for when they weren't with their families and so forth. We've offered school sites so they could do that at school sites and so forth, and so there's been that kind of use of our facilities in partnership between us. We have opened up eight community schools with the parks program and others, and we are clearly thinking of these sites as being family centered programs, where it's not a matter of the kids having a place to go absent the family, we're trying to bring the family in together. Now they may not participate in the exact same activity at the same time, but at least they come together, they go together, and as often as possible, participate in some programs. They may go to the computer lab and learn together. As a matter of fact, the kids teach the parents how to use the computer. And they participate in instruction, expand the student's skills, and bring the parents along in the process. Maybe country and western dancing together, but we're trying to expand on those opportunities where there's stress in the community, to bring families together so it's not a matter of getting families apart. A lot of our programs pull families apart, or they pull the kids away from the family in that the job of the parents is to drop them off and leave them and pick them up. We try to provide getting together opportunities. It's causing some programming rethinking and we're trying to accomplish that in some of our neighborhoods.

Henegar: I can give you a couple of examples. We have a great Parks Department and a Parks Director who has really embraced the idea of creating more programs so that our parks have more people in them. Parks not only provide a place for recreation for kids to play, but as Marty has alluded, for families to spend time together and for communities to be in the same place together, neighbors to start to build that sense of community. On our near east side, we've started a soccer program where there wasn't one. It was something that not only allowed an opportunity for kids to play where we have a very high concentration of children, but also was something that the community, the parents, and other adults felt that they wanted. It's provided an opportunity for them to serve as volunteer helpers and coaches. We all know that coaches are awesome mentors, so it's provided a way for that connection to occur. Another example is we -- for two years now, and this may have been our third -- provided sites for summer lunch programs. We have coupled with other non-for-profit groups who do summer camp programs at our parks and hosted a site for the Department of Education to then pay for lunches for these kids. We've been able to feed thousands, tens of thousands of kids every summer through that program. It's helped the not-for-profits, whether they be churches or other youth groups,

because it's provided funding for their food and then helps the kids. And, it helps the parks because it brings kids into the parks, and they think of it as a friendly and welcoming place.

I just want to caution, though, that it's -- at least for me, and I can't think that I'm that unique -- a challenge to talk to all levels of the city and all levels of the community into seeing how family strengthening relates to them. Parks is a logical connection, but whether it's public safety or public works, there are roles of department administration, and we are a huge employer on the city level. Our employees themselves could benefit from thinking about financial stability and financial literacy, thinking about good parenting techniques, and how they can help their kids with homework. We, at the city level, have adopted an educational flex program. We not only allow parents the flexibility to attend parent-teacher conferences and other programs related to their child's schooling, but we also give them days off every semester to help in a local school. They don't have to have kids, and it doesn't have to be related to their kids' school, but we give them time off if they want to help in a school. So there are tactics that you can play, just as an employer. But, again, it's been through persistence on my part and our cabinet meetings at the city level. I have people, as soon as I open my mouth, who know I'm going to say something about family strengthening. But bit by bit, they've started to see how it relates to the things that they do. It's only by that kind of persistence that it, hopefully, will become second nature. As Marty alluded, the next time they go to create a program in the parks, maybe they won't make it so that parents aren't involved. They'll make it a program that parents do have a role, so it's not only fun for the kid or fun for the adult; it's a time for them to spend quality time together. That's something that doesn't cost any money but it does take thinking about things a little bit differently. Hopefully family strengthening will become second nature throughout city government, but also throughout the community.

Kyle: What Jane was just describing in terms of cabinet meetings in city hall, where she is viewed as the person who keeps raising the family strengthening banner: in Louisville or in other cities, Bill, that you've seen, is there a flag waver? Is there a leading person who kind of may not run all the various elements but is the rallying cry? Is this an important element of this making connections movement in the cities you're experiencing? Do you think there's somebody in Louisville who kind of champions this, or is it coming in a different place, a different way?

Bell: I think there's probably a group of us that do, but as agencies, we've got a pretty good success working together, so we keep each other's focus and needs, I think, pretty high on each other's radar screen. But I will say I think one of the key things which Jane alluded to or said is making sure that someone that can impact policy is there, keeping it on the radar screen, because that makes it a big blip on the radar screen, versus a minimal blip on a radar screen. I would say in this community, there's probably a variety of champions that look at partnering these things together, working them together, but it's because we've got a long experience with working together. I wouldn't say it's an individual, but a group of individuals with the different agencies. I can safely say that there are folks over at the Health Department, if they've got some initiative that's going to impact kids, they're going to try and figure out a way to work the city and the school system and other folks in to make it a better plan to support kids and families.

Henegar: I agree with Marty. I'm certainly the one who drones on about it at the city level, but there are counterparts, -- whether at the community foundation here or at the United Way or

in any number of entities. One of the heartening things, too, in this process is we talk about family strengthening through the coalition and through various efforts that we've undertaken. The number of people who have come up to me whose profession would not suggest the statement, but they come up and say, "Oh, I want to hear more about family strengthening because that's my passion." I think there are lots of people who have come to the conclusion that only by thinking about these elements of a family's life, economic success, informal supports, formal supports, and making sure that families have an input on how those connections are made and that government and the private sector and the not-for-profit sector think about making those connections. Only by doing that are families ultimately going to have success and our neighborhoods are going to have success.

There are lots of people who have come to that conclusion through their individual work, so the more you talk about it, especially those of us who have an opportunity to talk to a broader circle, the more people who have come to that conclusion on their own. It's a reflection of his commitment. I'm sure Marty is the same way, that the time and energy that he and others in the school system devote to this is a reflection of what that entity, how much that entity values this issue. That has a powerful effect on people.

Kyle: You were just touching on something about the will of your boss, the mayor, to really want to take this on. One of the questioners is from an organization that actually provides funding and would like to be Casey-like in terms of supporting this, but is concerned about political conditions and how this plays in terms of the political arena. When you're running for elected office, is this part of a campaign or not? Is this something that's easily espoused or is it difficult to stretch the leadership among elected officials in Louisville and in Indianapolis, and, Bill, in other cities? Can you give some quick answers about what you think the political landscape is in regards to family strengthening?

Bell: Neighborhood Place, which is focused on family strengthening and has been now, since it's original thought process, has survived two mayors, two county judges, three Department of Health directors, two superintendents, three cabinet secretaries at the state level, and two governors.

Kyle: So a variety of officials from a variety of points of view at various times have all still been supportive of family strengthening, so it seems to be a winner.

Bell: You draw in your breath when you change leadership in an organization. That's the importance of having policy makers there to talk to other policy makers, in my opinion, to help spread that word so they can see the value for the community, and when it's valuable for the community, it's valuable for politics. People are running for office now, talking about collaboration and working with other agencies. Instead of what I can do in my silo, it's how I can help other organizations. I think that's pretty healthy but I think it's indicative of what's going on here. I will add a footnote, we just voted to have our city and county government to merge, to become a metro government, which will take effect January 1st of 2003, and I think we're all holding our breath to see what that's going to turn. But we think it's going to be positive. I know you've been metro government for a long time. You've been metro government about as long as we've been a single school system, in Indianapolis. But it does occasionally draw your attention.

Kyle: Another kind of question I wanted to ask was about the child welfare system: adoption, foster care, abuse and neglect, and family composition. What relevance and connection is there to the kinds of family strengthening you all have been talking about today in terms of making connections and those parts of your systems that are looking at the frailties of families and having some real challenges about child placement, family needs and so forth. Can you tell me anything about that? They're concerned about various kinds of policies and law, rights of families, rights of parents, and rights of children. Has this come into play as you've all worked through family strengthening issues in terms of a making connections context?

Henegar: I can say that it actually has not come up that much so far in our discussions. Now, I don't know if that's because talking about family strengthening as family strengthening is relatively new and we haven't gotten to that issue. Maybe people find it so daunting and intimidating that they're saving that until they get clearer footing. Again, these issues are things that people have been devoting their lives to for decades. But thinking about it in these terms is maybe a slightly new prism. But for whatever reason, it has not come up. To the extent that there's a concern that the term "family strengthening" implies some bias toward or away from those issues of do you keep the family together, how long do you emphasize preservation over safety -- that has not been a discussion so I can't really speak to that.

Kyle: I think more the question is, in Indianapolis are you thinking of talking to the local and state child welfare authorities who are working on issues like family preservation and adoption and foster care and removal of children. Is that part of where you think you ought to have part of the conversation happen?

Henegar: I think it will come to that.

Kyle: But it hasn't yet.

Henegar: Right. And we're just beginning to partner with the state on family and child issues in a new way. So I think that will come as that discussion evolves.

Shepardson: This comes up from the neighborhood level. If you're working in tough neighborhoods, there are often a lot of families that have worked with the child welfare system or the judicial system, and the way a lot of communities have taken this on is really making sure that as child welfare systems think of that reform, whatever it is, and then Jane is right in saying that family strengthening doesn't mean one solution or the other. But the families themselves are involved in making some of those important decisions, so we've seen communities do things like explore and then implement family team meetings as part of that system so that families and the people they depend on are involved in making those important decisions about their kids. In a handful of the cities, including Louisville, the Foundation's Family-to-Family program, which looks at, in some cases, preventing problems before they ever happen. But if there are problems and the system steps in, keeping kids in their neighborhoods with relatives and places that they're familiar with and safe and sound, while some of those other tough issues are worked out.

Kyle: The last question: measurement, evaluation, impact of family strengthening efforts, “making connection” efforts -- how do you go about measuring them? What kinds of outcomes should one expect to see? I remember earlier in the conversation, in terms of assets building, the numbers of dollars coming in through the EITC is one way to measure an outcome. But are there other things that you’re looking at? Then, I’ll let everybody wrap up.

Shepardson: This has been an important issue throughout the work in all the sites. The Foundation has been in conversations with the communities they’ve been working with over time, but their position really is that communities themselves have to have a sense of what they’re working toward and what’s important. The Casey Foundation is looking for some intersection between their interests as well. So there’s sort of a framework emerging where people are looking at short-term results around family economic success, and your EITC example actually putting cash in the family’s pocket is a good one. Longer term results in that area might be beginning to measure how many families in a particular neighborhood get and keep a job that pays a decent family living wage. There’s a set of results, many of which have to do with a connection to work, the family’s ability to save and earn and invest. Then some of the other things that research and experience have shown us contribute to that, like families participating in the life of their neighborhood. Some of these things can be measured through the sorts of data warehouses that both Marty and Jane talked about, and really less and less it’s a problem technically of getting that data. But some of the things that the communities are really interested in have to do with assets that aren’t as easily measured, and the Foundation is investing with local partners and a lot of the cities to come up with new ways to collect that sort of data about the assets that we’re seeing spring up in neighborhoods where people are making focused investments and doing it. For instance, in San Diego and Providence, they have young people going around mapping neighborhood assets in a way that does involve the kids in their community life. It produces new data that you can convincingly use to make a case that these new investments in these neighborhoods are moving families step by step towards economic self sufficiency and a place where they can raise happy, healthy, safe kids.

Kyle: Is there a website or a place for further information, Bill, if someone wants to get more general information about “Making Connections?”

Shepardson: There’s the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s website: www.aecf.org. We are about to launch a website, which will display all the information we’ve been collecting to help Making Connections to at least learn more about promising practices and what’s going on in other places. That will be the Technical Assistance website. (<http://www.aecf.org/tarc>)

Kyle: Jane and Marty, as you make a concluding comment and your farewell remark, if you’ve got a particular resource or phone number or anything to give for more information, you can feel free to say it. Marty, do you want to go first to make a concluding comment as we wrap up here?

Bell: I was just going to comment on evaluation. In the collaborations we’ve built, we’ve built in that we want to measure what our results are going to be and I think we’ve got some pretty strong data that we’re making a difference. You asked about Child Protective Services and so forth -- it is a critical component of two of the Neighborhood Places and we’re

trying to expand it to the other six. We've got some very strong data that suggests that we've significantly reduced the repeat recidivism with child abuse. We've also made a genuine effort, and we've got statistics and data to show that we've kept more kids at home or in their neighborhood so there is less change in their life if they had to be removed from the home. So we'd agree upon data components that we're going to go after and measure and then we also make that a critical part of the staff training, is that this is what we're trying to measure and what we're going after. So there's a pretty strong consensus in this community if we're going to do something, we want to be able to measure it and see if there are some results of it.

The website for Neighborhood Place is <http://www.neighborhoodpl.org/>

Kyle: Jane, your concluding comments?

Henegar: I think that talking about measurement is a great way to sum up. In Indianapolis, we've found that once we get to the point where we identified what results we're trying to achieve, that has been, knock on wood, a turning point in solidifying the connection that all different parts of the community have to this common goal of stronger families. So once we identified our five community results, then people from all different circumstances, whether it be from business or the health department or a community center, said I have something to talk about. And then from those results, we were right in the thick of the process of saying okay, how do we measure whether we're going to be successful in achieving those results. So I think that's a key not only to be able to demonstrate after the fact, but also in solidifying people's connection to the process in getting there.

Our general website in Indianapolis is <http://www.indygov.org/>. I believe you can link from there to our information on the Family Strengthening Coalition. If not, then you can certainly send me e-mail through that, and I can get any information people might want.

Kyle: I want to thank everyone today for participating, questioners and listeners on the line, and Jane Henegar from Deputy Mayor of Indianapolis, Bill Shepardson from the Technical Assistance Resource Center, working on behalf of the Casey Foundation and the Center for the Study of Social Policy, and Marty Bell from the Superintendent's Office in Jefferson County, Louisville Public Schools. Thank you very much.

You can check out the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families at our website, www.nlc.org/iyef. It tells you about our various action kits, one of them on EITC, for instance, on "Helping Working Families," and both past and present audioconferences.