

February 10, 2003

Dear SRFC Collaborative Partners:

Last year I sent you all a letter to update you on the progress made by SRFC partners in FY 2000-01. I would like to continue that tradition by sharing with you the incredible successes achieved in FY 2001–02.

In reflecting with the Joint Powers Board about the progress made in 2002-2002, I asked them to describe our progress this year in the form of a picture. They decided that our progress would be best depicted with a large group of people standing on a rock to show that our collaborative is 'rock solid'. This year we not only enjoyed solid partnerships with statutory and community partners, we addressed funding challenges together and continued to hold ourselves accountable for high outcome standards.

You will see, by looking at our Annual 2002 Report, that all of our outcome teams have put concerted effort towards measuring outcomes at the family/kid level, program level and when possible, the community and system level. This is not easy to do, especially with NO evaluation funding. ALL of the data collection and evaluation work that our partners did was and continues to be in-kind. Do we ever hear complaints about doing this work? Rarely, because we all commit to holding ourselves accountable for making a significant positive difference in the lives of kids and families in Suburban Ramsey County.

Again, our collaborative partners have succeeded in increasing protective factors and decreasing risk factors affecting children, youth and families in Suburban Ramsey County. However, each year we continue to become more effective and efficient at achieving this goal. Service providers have gone above and beyond by actively and creatively engaging families who are experiencing high isolation in our communities. They are targeting services to assist those kids who are experiencing high risk circumstances, and continuing to involve kids and families in the evaluation and planning of services to ensure that they are effective, meaningful and helpful. In addition, all of these efforts utilize research-tested strategies to guide their work.

It is very rare that a collaboration of committed groups, organizations and individuals can move beyond championing broad concepts, to actually operationalizing service delivery shifts and affecting systems change. It is also rare for collaborative partners to move beyond just being 'keepers of the vision', to truly becoming engaged stakeholders who have forged a common language and created an integrative paradigm. We have not only shifted our thinking, but actually the feeling about the work we do, and it can not be under-stated. This is the culture-building and partnership-building work that our collaborative has done. It is a critical investment of time and leadership hours that if lost, would take years to reclaim.

We thank you for continuing to be committed partners in the collaborative work we've begun. We know that together, we can achieve much more than done individually. The times are hard now and we know they will be getting even harder, but we believe that the investment of our collective work will pay off in the long run if we continue to work together to achieve our shared outcomes.

Sincerely,

Mary Sue Hansen, Director
Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative