

# Strengths-Based Practice: A Community Speaks

9<sup>th</sup> Annual APSAC Colloquium

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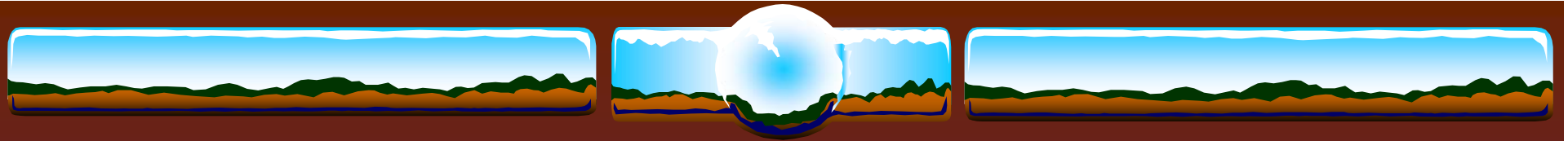
Family Connections Program

University of Maryland School of Social Work



# Acknowledgements

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# Who are we?

## How are we going to spend our time?

- ❖ Introductions and interests
- ❖ Program description and rationale for work
- ❖ Focus-group method & procedures
- ❖ Strengths-based practice
- ❖ Results & discussion
- ❖ Other?





# Family Connections



- ❖ Mission: Promoting the safety and well-being of children and families through family and community services, professional education and training, and research and evaluation.



# Program Description & Rationale for Work

- ❖ Family Connections
  - ❖ Guiding philosophies
  - ❖ Environment
- ❖ Community consensus building
- ❖ Strengths-based goodness-of-fit





# Focus Group – Membership (1)

- ❖ 1) Current & past program staff & students
  - ❖ 10 women
  - ❖ Mean age 40 years (25-51)
  - ❖ Mean work experience 9.4 years (0-28)
  - ❖ 70% Caucasian, 30% African American
  - ❖ 4 BA, 4 MSW, 2 PhD



# Focus Groups – Membership (2)

- ❖ 2) Community providers
  - ❖ 6 women, 4 men
  - ❖ Mean age 46 years (30-60)
  - ❖ Mean work experience 11 years (0-26)
  - ❖ 5 Caucasian, 5 African American
  - ❖ 2 HS, 4 MA/MSW, 4 MD/PhD



# Focus Groups – Membership (3)

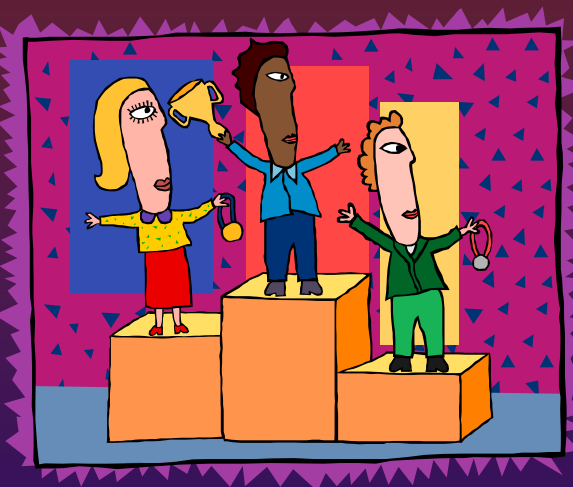
- ❖ Former clients

- ❖ 6 women

- ❖ Mean age 51 years (27-72)

- ❖ 100% African American

- ❖ 2 7-8th grade, 1 9-11th grade, 2 HS/AA



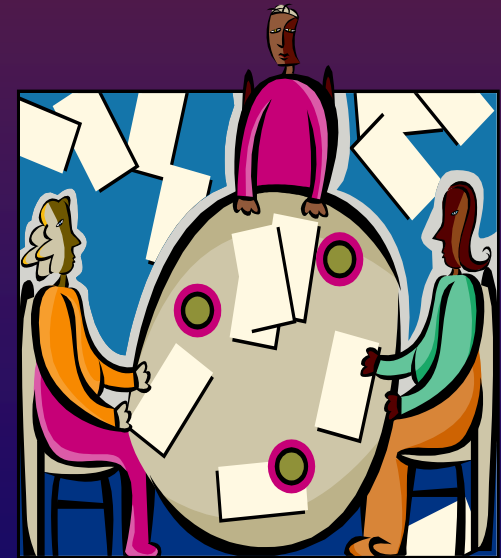
# Focus Groups – Membership (4)

- ❖ Community residents
  - ❖ 13 women, 1 man
  - ❖ Mean age 35 years (20-48)
  - ❖ 100% African American
  - ❖ 2 7-8th, 8 9-11th, 2 HS



# Procedure

- ❖ Participant, facilitator & site selections
- ❖ Readiness to participate
- ❖ Structure & process of sessions
- ❖ Member rewards





# Guiding Questions

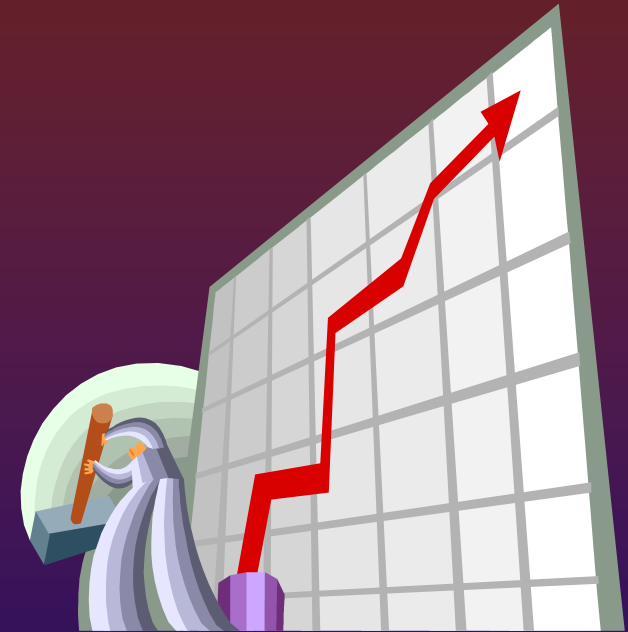


- ❖ What services did families find helpful/not helpful?
- ❖ What made families want to return/not return to work with an agency after introduction?
- ❖ What ways of working together were most/least desirable?



# Analysis

- ❖ Facilitator notes
- ❖ Videotapes/transcripts
- ❖ Themes
- ❖ Similarities & differences
- ❖ Consistency with strengths perspective

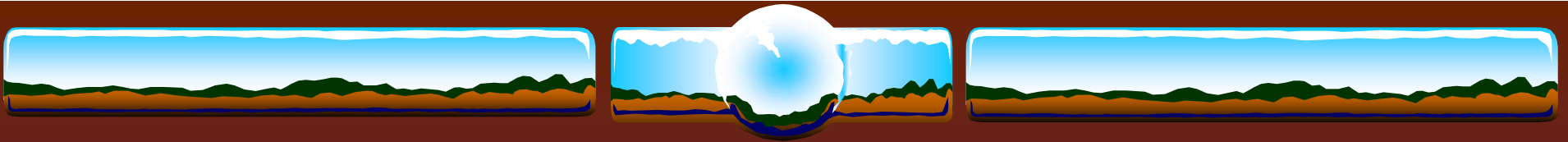




# Strengths-Based Practice

- ❖ As a service model
- ❖ With diverse populations
- ❖ As a paradigm shift
- ❖ In assessment
- ❖ During intervention





# Strengths Perspective as a Basis for Analysis

- ❖ 1 Focus on strengths, abilities, knowledge & capacities of individuals & families.
- ❖ 2 The relationship between clients & helpers is an essential component of the helping process.
- ❖ 3 The helping process is directed by the client.
- ❖ 4 All humans beings have the capacity to learn, grow & change.
- ❖ 5 Help is designed to be provided in the community, not in the confines of a building.

(Kisthardt, 1997)



# Focus on Strengths, Abilities, Knowledge & Capacities

- ❖ Focus on strengths
- ❖ Recognizing success or progress
- ❖ Avoiding communication that conveys blame
- ❖ Desire for respect
- ❖ Acknowledge what is important to the client
- ❖ Emphasis on talents





# Relationship Between Clients & Helpers as an Essential Component

- ❖ Process of engagement
- ❖ Building confidence in the relationship
- ❖ Perceived competence of the worker
- ❖ Conveying genuine empathy
- ❖ Relationship has meaning to the client & helper
- ❖ What helps to foster the relationship

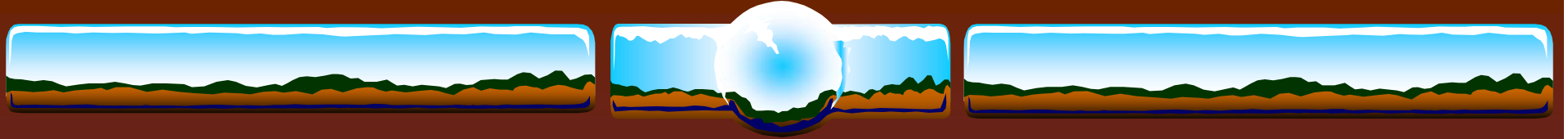




# Helping Process Is Directed by the Client

- ❖ Client's right to self-determination
- ❖ Clients defining service outcomes
- ❖ Clients knowing best what they need





# All Human Beings have the Capacity to Learn, Grow & Change

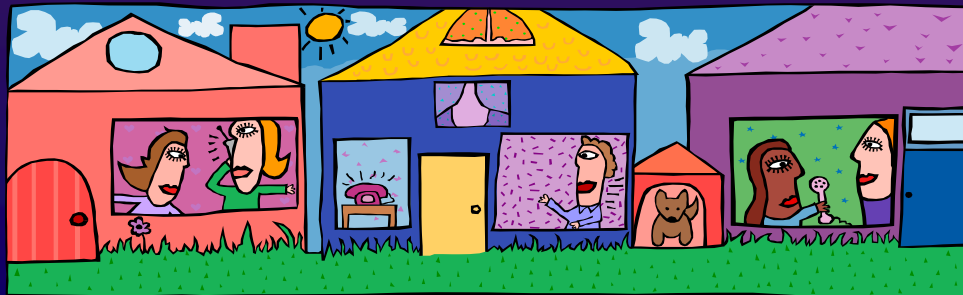
- ❖ Helping families see changes they are making
- ❖ Reinforce achievement of goals & outcomes
- ❖ Hope for a brighter future





# Help Is Designed to be Provided in the Community

- ❖ Knowing about & using community resources
  - ❖ Families as good consumers
  - ❖ Providers as advocates for services
- ❖ Overcoming fears of homes & neighborhoods





# Conclusions

- ❖ Emerging themes helped support key principles of the strengths perspective
- ❖ Utilizing principles of the perspective may increase family engagement in the change process
- ❖ Engagement may improve the likelihood of achieving successful outcomes
- ❖ Study does not provide support for the effectiveness of the perspective

