

SITE BRIEF

Understanding the Value of Centralized Services: Neighborhood Place

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This site brief describes the centralized services provided at Neighborhood Place in Louisville, Kentucky. The brief is one of three developed as part of the *Understanding the Value of Centralized Services (VOCS) Study*, awarded to MEF Associates and its subcontractor, Mathematica, by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families.

The VOCS study is a broad inquiry to explore the benefits and challenges of providing multiple social services at a single location for families with low income. It examines the range of models used to provide centralized services, the advantages, disadvantages, and costs of providing multiple services for families with low income at one location, and the use of virtual coordination as a complement to centralized services provided in person.

For the purposes of this study, we use the following definition of a “centralized community resource center” (CCRC): *Brick-and-mortar locations where individuals can apply for or receive multiple services and/or benefits that are funded by the federal government.*

The study includes three main components:

- Consultations with interested individuals and groups for active engagement and experts;
- A targeted literature review; and
- Site visits to three CCRCs that use varying approaches for centralizing services.

This brief draws on qualitative data collected from the site visit to Neighborhood Place in April 2022. The team conducted semi-structured interviews with program leadership, staff, and partners; focus groups with clients; and observations of partner meetings and physical space, including lobbies and general office layouts.

The findings of the study are presented in a final report, which can be accessed on the [VOCS project page](#) on ACF’s website.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s, schools in Jefferson County, Kentucky, were experiencing high levels of truancy and high dropout rates. The public school system began to shift toward a school-linked services model to connect students and their families with resources. The Kentucky Education Reform Act, passed in 1990, created Family Resource and Youth Service Centers to help students and their families navigate available health and social services. Building on these efforts outside the school system, a group of leaders from the school system and other social service agencies in Louisville envisioned a new model to promote deeper collaboration and communication, which eventually led to the creation of Neighborhood Place.


Neighborhood Place is a partnership of the Louisville Metro Government, Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services (DCBS), and Seven Counties Services, a nonprofit mental health provider. Neighborhood Place locations across Jefferson County function as the “front door” for the four partner agencies, meaning their client-facing services are delivered at Neighborhood Place locations. Direct service staff from the four partner agencies are co-located at each Neighborhood Place building to serve residents of that particular neighborhood. The Family Resource and Youth Service Centers are now one of the main referral sources of families in the school system to Neighborhood Place.

The first Neighborhood Place location opened in 1993 and other locations followed. Neighborhood Places are located in areas of concentrated poverty, as measured by the number of children who receive free and reduced price lunch in a specific neighborhood, and situated in or near schools. At the time of the study team’s visit in March 2022, there were seven Neighborhood Place locations with an eighth planned to open shortly thereafter. Collectively, the locations serve many communities within Jefferson County, and each location adapts to meet the needs of the individuals in that community.

GEOGRAPHIC SERVICE AREA

Jefferson County, Kentucky


Seven locations, primarily in the city of Louisville




ABOUT THE SITE

Type of site: Collaborative of public-sector agencies


Key Partners:
Louisville Metro Government
Jefferson County Public Schools
Kentucky Department for Community Based Services
Seven Counties Services, Inc.



Primary Funding Source: Various. Each partner agency contributes



Size:
20-45 employees per location
About 100,000 clients served per year





Pictured: Neighborhood Place Northwest

Neighborhood Place’s mission is to provide accessible health, education, employment, and human services that support families in their progress towards self-sufficiency. Partner agencies share a commitment to community engagement and family self-sufficiency. Neighborhood Place’s mission has not changed in its nearly 30-year history, and leadership remain committed to the vision of the collaborative. It is intentional about making sure that new staff and elected officials understand the high-level goals.

Each Neighborhood Place location seeks to respond to the needs of its individual community. For example, some Neighborhood Place locations serve an increasingly diverse population with

various language needs and, thus, rely on language lines and interpreters to ensure that staff can effectively serve families whose first language is not English.

In addition, every Neighborhood Place has a Community Council, an advisory group made up of community members, such as other service providers, leaders in faith communities, and school board members. Community Council members serve as representatives of the community and advocates for Neighborhood Place. The group of Community Council members understands community needs and strengths and communicates those needs to Neighborhood Place staff. Community Council members also play an important role in outreach, using their networks and connections to promote Neighborhood Place’s mission and supporting staff to plan community outreach events.



Pictured: Staff “Vision Board” at a Neighborhood Place

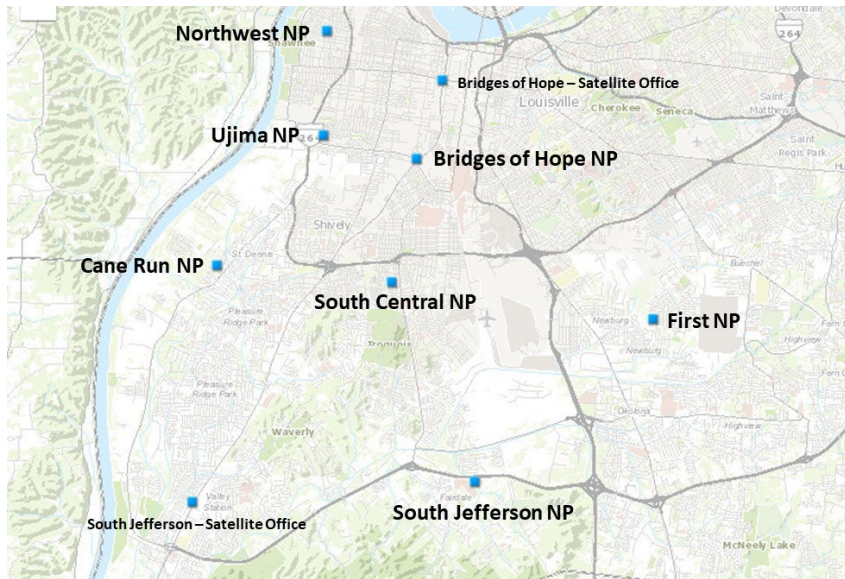
This brief discusses the communities and population served by Neighborhood Place, the structure of Neighborhood Place’s services, and staff and client reflections on the service model.

CLIENTS AND COMMUNITIES SERVED

Jefferson County has a population of around 780,000, primarily concentrated in the city of Louisville.¹ Exhibit 1 shows a map of the Neighborhood Place locations.

¹ 2020 Census Bureau Quick Facts for Jefferson County, Kentucky. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/jeffersoncountykentucky>

Exhibit 1. Map of Neighborhood Place Locations



Neighborhood Place locations serve families living in poverty across Jefferson County. The variations between neighborhoods in Jefferson County are rooted in their history, with high levels of poverty in the north and west neighborhoods of Louisville and more affluent communities in the east.

- **West Louisville.** This area of the city has historically been an area of concentrated poverty, with a majority Black population. Along the Ohio River in West Louisville are three Neighborhood Place locations within a few miles of one another (Northwest, Ujima, and Cane Run Neighborhood Places).
- **South and Central Louisville.** Bridges of Hope Neighborhood Place is located near downtown Louisville, South Central Neighborhood Place is directly south, and First Neighborhood Place is southeast of downtown. These locations also serve communities with a high concentration of poverty and many families of color.
- **South Jefferson County.** South Jefferson Neighborhood Place is located in Fairdale, a more rural neighborhood farther outside the city center of Louisville. The South Jefferson community is historically home to majority White, blue-collar workers and their families, but substantial increases in racial and ethnic diversity have resulted from refugee resettlement in recent years.

Neighborhood Place's planned eighth location will open in East Louisville in 2022.

The city of Louisville, while growing in racial diversity over recent years, has long been racially segregated. The city's Black population remains clustered in the western neighborhoods, whereas East Louisville is mostly White. The history of segregation is important context for the Neighborhood Place model because residents are hesitant to leave their neighborhoods for social services. The residents of the West End historically faced discriminatory housing practices and limited access to health and education resources.² In the 1990s, Neighborhood Place locations were

² Making Louisville Home for Us All: A 20-Year Action Plan for Fair Housing. Louisville Metro Human Relations Commission and University of Louisville Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research. 2013. <https://louisville.edu/braden/files/FairHousingReportprinted2013.pdf>

established throughout the West End in response to the high rates of poverty and lack of resources in the neighborhoods. In recent years and especially in the wake of the community's racial justice protests after the death of Breonna Taylor, Louisville Metro Government has invested in infrastructure, housing, and economic development in West End neighborhoods.³

Population served

The clients that Neighborhood Place serves have a variety of needs and experience systemic challenges, as identified by staff and clients.

- **Transportation is a significant need in the community, and lack of transportation is a significant barrier to receiving services.** The public transportation system in Louisville is limited, so Neighborhood Place ensures its locations are accessible by selecting sites near bus lines and directly in the neighborhoods where potential clients live. Before Neighborhood Place, DCBS and Louisville Metro Government provided services such as food and utility assistance downtown, which can be far from where clients live and challenging to access via public transportation. Staff described difficulty reaching individuals who were eligible for services because many were unable or unwilling to overcome transportation barriers. Clients described the ease in getting to their local Neighborhood Place because they could walk, take a short bus trip, or get a ride from friends and family, who may have been unwilling to drive them downtown.
- **Mental health and substance use challenges are prevalent in the communities served by Neighborhood Place.** Staff noted that families and clients struggle with mental health needs and addiction, fueled by the opioid epidemic. Drug-related overdoses and hospitalizations for substance use disorders increased in Jefferson County and Kentucky as a whole over the period 2016 to 2020.⁴
- **Access to affordable child care is limited and was especially so during the COVID-19 pandemic.** Reflecting nationwide trends, many child care facilities in Jefferson County are especially short-staffed or have closed, including two-thirds of the child care centers in one neighborhood, according to Neighborhood Place staff. Staff shared that having no access to child care may prevent families from getting services they need because bringing their young children to the office can be difficult for clients.
- **Housing instability is prevalent among Neighborhood Place clients.** Staff described how many extended families live together in one shared space, and Neighborhood Place has clients who are experiencing homelessness.
- **The growing immigrant and refugee populations of Jefferson County have also led to a need for translation services to address language barriers between staff and clients.** Though Neighborhood Place has translation and language line services, staff expressed a desire for more comprehensive services or better training in using these services. Greater

³ West Louisville Strategies for Success 2021. Louisville Forward. <https://louisvilleky.gov/louisville-forward/document/west-louisville-strategies-success-2021>

⁴ Kentucky Resident Drug Overdose Rates by State and Counties. Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center. <https://kiprc.uky.edu/programs/overdose-data-action/county-profiles>

access to and use of translation services would increase access to needed services for the increasingly diverse families Neighborhood Place is serving.

- **Other client needs include basics, such as utilities, food, and medical assistance.** Staff shared that these basic needs transcend every racial and ethnic demographic and that staff must address those needs before working with clients on other goals, such as employment and training.

Staff shared that one major strength of their clients is the support and solidarity they find in their families and communities. Staff noted that the fact that many of their clients are able to provide for themselves, despite all of the challenges they face, is a testament to their mental strength and resiliency.

Connection to the community

The Neighborhood Place model allows for each location to adjust its services based on local needs. Staff describe each Neighborhood Place as having its own “personality” based on the community in

“ I would say [Neighborhood Place] really holds the community together.
- Client ”

which it is located, the connections staff have within the broader community, and the interests and expertise of the staff on site. For example, one location with strong connections to its local schools focuses on a back-to-school event, described in Box 1, whereas another location emphasizes mental health and substance use disorder services because of client needs and the expertise of the management-level staff there.

Neighborhood Place partner agencies aim to hire staff with a connection to the specific neighborhood and to draw on the community expertise of members of the Community Council. Some staff live in the community, and others have connections to service providers in the area. During the hiring process, one partner agency includes questions about a candidate’s connections to the community, and it seeks staff who reflect the makeup of the community. The Community Councils also help keep site administrators, who oversee each Neighborhood Place location, informed of the needs they see in their communities and the services that would help address those needs. The ways in which Community Councils collaborate with Neighborhood Place staff to engage with the community are described in Box 1.

“ [The Community Council] can truly be the eyes, ears, and mouth of the community and the Neighborhood Place.
- Community Council Member ”

To supplement the information from the Council on community needs, Louisville Metro Government’s Office of Resilience and Community Services conducts an annual Community Needs Assessment to take stock of the needs and barriers to economic success countywide. The needs assessment incorporates demographic data and labor statistics along with a community survey to gather input directly from residents. Louisville Metro Government encourages staff and clients at Neighborhood Place locations to complete the survey and shares needs assessment results with Neighborhood Place site administrators.

Box 1. Community Engagement Events

Neighborhood Place holds events intended to create a sense of community and spread the word about Neighborhood Place services and other resources. For example, South Jefferson Neighborhood Place and its Community Council host an annual back-to-school event where families (both those engaged with Neighborhood Place and those who are not) receive resource packets and free backpacks and meet with staff from different agencies and organizations that provide resources. A variety of different city agencies participate, setting up booths as well as activities for children.

One member of the Council shared that *“When we do events like that, it’s a Neighborhood Place event. It’s not like Jefferson County Public Schools or highlighting a specific agency, it’s a partnership community event. It’s all the partners that make this event happen, not for one agency, but a shared success. If one [partner] is struggling, then we all chip in to take care of one another. If one of us has a success, we all share in it.”*

SERVICES AND CENTRALIZATION

Each Neighborhood Place offers services according to the needs of the community it serves. Examples of these services are listed in Box 2.

Service Delivery

Neighborhood Place uses physical co-location, a Release of Information (ROI) form, and warm handoffs to connect clients to services.

Physical Space

The lobby at each Neighborhood Place includes a front desk where clients check in, which is staffed by different agencies in the building. There is a drop box, where clients can return applications for individual benefit programs, and a place to find handouts on services offered at Neighborhood Place and in the community. Because each location has a team onsite to provide child protective services, there is a security guard in the lobby and a visitation space onsite. The

Box 2. Services Provided by Neighborhood Place

- Utility assistance
- Rent assistance
- Food assistance
- Health and nutrition supports for pregnant women and infants
- Home visiting
- School social services and truancy prevention
- Financial assistance for families with low income
- Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program eligibility and enrollment
- Child protective services
- Child welfare services
- Child care assistance
- Mental health and substance use disorder treatment

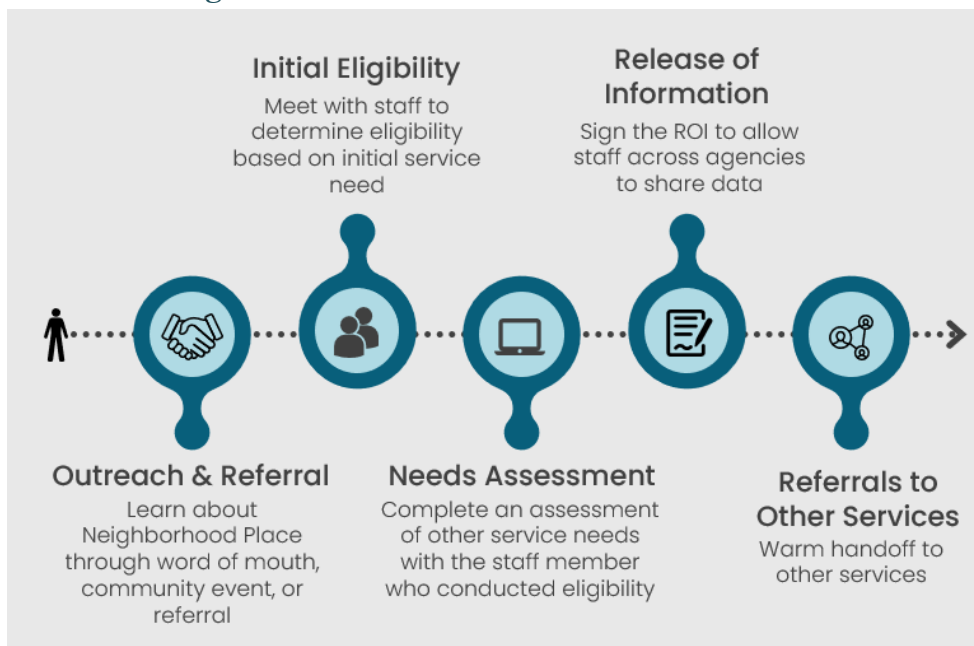
configuration of each location is different depending on the building layout, but many have open spaces with cubicles along with offices, meeting rooms, and a food pantry space.

Client Flow

As depicted in Exhibit 2, clients usually hear about Neighborhood Place through word-of-mouth, community outreach events, and internal referrals from the partner agencies (for instance, a referral from a JCPS resource center), then engage in eligibility determination, a needs assessment, ROI, and referrals to other services.

Though a client typically comes to Neighborhood Place with a specific service need, staff from all partner agencies use a common assessment to identify needs. One of the staff members at the location, usually from the program from which the client is seeking services, conducts an initial assessment to determine eligibility and to learn about other needs. The staff member introduces clients to staff of another agency in-person, if possible—a warm handoff—and if clients need assistance with those other services. From the perspective of clients in the focus group, staff work together to provide a smooth experience for clients across many services. Staff may also follow up with clients to see whether they received services at the different agencies to which they were referred. If clients are uncomfortable communicating in English, Neighborhood Place uses language lines and interpreters to help with translation.

Exhibit 2. Neighborhood Place Client Flow



During the intake process, clients complete Neighborhood Place’s ROI form, which allows staff to share client-specific information across agencies. We discuss the ROI form in more detail in the upcoming Data Sharing subsection.

The length of time clients receive services varies, depending on the service and the client’s circumstances. For instance, utility assistance offered through the Low-Income Home Energy

Assistance Program is available only at certain times of the year.⁵ Other services are longer-term, such as Healthy Start, which provides support through monthly home visits while a woman is pregnant and until her child is 18 months old. Alternatively, clients may receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid for a longer time but with less intensive communication with staff. Many clients with whom we spoke received services from Neighborhood Place multiple times over many years, returning when, for example, they were between jobs and needed assistance with housing and food, needed counseling, or became eligible for senior benefits.

Neighborhood Place continued to provide the same services during the COVID-19 pandemic but adapted its service delivery model, as described in Box 3.

Box 3. Service Adaptations during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Like other service providers, Neighborhood Place had to pivot quickly to provide services remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff could receive applications over the phone and via drop boxes outside the Neighborhood Place locations. Applications are available online through the different partner agencies (though not directly from Neighborhood Place), and clients could connect with staff via phone. Clients could also call a state hotline to apply for DCBS, including Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (the state’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program), SNAP, Medicaid, and child care.

Working with clients remotely was beneficial in some ways because it saved time for clients and staff and reduced wait time and travel time for clients. Some program staff shared that they could process applications more quickly and can meet deadlines more efficiently.

However, staff described drawbacks to virtual services, including access challenges for clients less comfortable with technology; operational challenges with the state hotline, such as long wait times and getting disconnected; and fewer opportunities for relationship building between staff and clients. For example, staff who conduct home visits noted that being unable to do so during the pandemic made getting a complete sense of the needs of the family difficult.

At the time of this writing in 2022, Neighborhood Place leadership had not decided whether remote services would become a permanent part of the CCRC’s model.

Staffing

Each Neighborhood Place location is led by a site administrator employed by Louisville Metro Office of Resilience and Community Services. Administrator is one of two “partnership-specific positions” at Neighborhood Place. Site administrators are responsible for overseeing the collaboration efforts at a particular location. The other partnership-specific position is a coordinator of community support, hired by JCPS and responsible for connecting families to services outside Neighborhood Place, liaising

“You don’t realize that you’re working for different agencies, we’re just doing different assignments.”
- Staff member

⁵ LIHEAP Program Duration: Heating, Cooling, and Crisis. LIHEAP Clearinghouse. https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/tables/program_dates.htm

with staff from the school district about Neighborhood Place services, and working with the site administrator to plan community events.

All other staff work for one of the partner agencies, shown in Exhibit 3. Frontline staff from partner agencies are co-located on site to provide their program services. Some staff work across programs within their agency, and others focus on a single service. Although the site administrator does not directly supervise all of the staff members in the building, he or she is responsible for overseeing the collaboration efforts at that particular Neighborhood Place location.

Exhibit 3. Typical Staff Co-located at a Neighborhood Place

Louisville Metro	JCPS	Kentucky DCBS	Seven Counties
Site Administrator*	Coordinator of Community Support*	Protection & Permanency Supervisor/Frontline Staff <i>Child welfare</i>	Counselor <i>Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder</i>
Social Service Program Supervisor	Family Resource Youth Services Center Coordinator	Family Support Supervisor/Frontline Staff	
Case Managers	School Social Services and Truancy Prevention Supervisors/Frontline Staff	<i>Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP), SNAP, Medicaid, Child Care</i>	
Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Supervisors/Frontline Staff		Security Guard	
Healthy Start Supervisor/Frontline Staff			
* "Partnership" staff who oversee collaboration efforts across agencies			

Staff reported that being in the same building and being familiar with the staff from other agencies is crucial to their collaboration and partnerships. Staff feel comfortable reaching out to staff from other agencies and often ask questions by just walking over to a colleague’s cubicle. In addition, staff come together once a year for cross-training on partner agencies’ services and processes and other training on various topics, such as equity and inclusion.

Partnerships

Neighborhood Place is a partnership of multiple public service agencies, and both formal and informal practices exist to foster and maintain collaboration among the different agencies. The partner agencies signed a formal agreement in 1993 that acknowledges the collaboration effort of the

partners in the Neighborhood Place. Nearly three decades later, agencies still reference this agreement as evidence of their commitment to collaborate.

Because the partner agencies maintain separate staff, budgets, and data systems (as described in the upcoming Data Sharing subsection), staff noted the importance of having buy-in about the shared mission and vision from leadership and frontline staff to ensure the staff from separate agencies function as a team. Partner agencies encourage their staff to have a spirit of collaboration at every level. Furthermore, the Community Council plays an important role in advocating for Neighborhood Place if agencies waver in their commitment to the partnership.



The success also with Neighborhood Place and being able to service our clients is us not staying huddled inside, but going and saying, who can I capture for our events, who can I capture to come in so that we can somehow make a connection for our clients with these organizations?

- Staff member



Neighborhood Place promotes strong relationships and shared knowledge through regular communication and formal structures for collaboration. Points of coordination and communication among partner agencies include the following.

- **Committees.** Partners collaborate and manage Neighborhood Place operations through a committee structure. Multiple committees make decisions on different topics related to Neighborhood Place, such as finance, operations, and outcomes and data.
- **All-staff meetings.** Neighborhood Place locations have all-staff meetings once a month with frontline staff from all partner agencies.⁶
- **Integrated services meetings.** In these monthly meetings, each partner agency presents on a client or family with whom they are working, including details about that client's progression through Neighborhood Place services and a discussion of the client's needs. Other agencies are able to make suggestions, as well, to support the family. In addition to providing a regular opportunity for staff across agencies to collaborate in support of a specific client or family, staff described these meetings as a way for them to better understand the services and processes of other partner agencies. Staff hear how their colleagues from other agencies approach a case and learn about the different services and supports that agency offers.
- **New staff onboarding.** Site administrators are responsible for onboarding and training new staff, in addition to the training a staff person receives from his or her agency, and the more tenured staff help new colleagues settle in.

In addition to the formalized partnerships inside of Neighborhood Place, staff have informal partnerships with outside agencies. Neighborhood Place does not provide every service a client might need, but staff are connected in the community so they can suggest other resources a family

⁶ During the pandemic, staff meetings and integrated services meetings happened less regularly because staff were working remotely. The site visit occurred at a time of transition when site administrators were just beginning to consider how to bring back these types of structures.

might need. Staff can also refer clients to other Neighborhood Place locations that may offer a different array of services.

Data Sharing

Neighborhood Place does not have a shared data system among its partner agencies, but it has developed other processes to facilitate data sharing. Each agency is

responsible for collecting its own data, using whatever data system or systems are required by the agency or funding source. Currently, no formal data sharing agreements exist among agencies, but agencies share data on a particular client through the ROI form or aggregated data through a welcome survey and a performance management tool.

Release of information. Clients sign the ROI form, the main conduit for data sharing among the partner agencies, giving consent for them to share client-specific data with one another. By signing the ROI form, clients make an informed decision about which agencies are able to share their data, and agencies can avoid asking for duplicate information from the client and can instead verify information the client has previously provided.

The Neighborhood Place partner agencies developed the ROI form at the beginning of the partnership, and it remains a critical component of the frontline staff's ability to collaborate with one another. Constructing a form that both meets the needs of the staff and protects client data security and privacy was labor intensive—legal staff from each partner agency reviewed the document to make sure it met their organization's needs—but staff view it as worth the effort because it continues to be a central component of the Neighborhood Place model.

Welcome survey. Another way staff share data is through a welcome survey that clients complete on their first visit to Neighborhood Place. The welcome survey includes demographics, primary service need, and other such information. JCPS collects welcome survey data and shares it back to staff at the Neighborhood Place locations so they better understand their client population.

Performance management tool. Neighborhood Place uses a performance management tool to track aggregated data on key measures. The tool, developed in partnership with Vanderbilt University (Coverstone and Van Heukelum, 2013), provides a report across agencies on specific outcomes of interest. It allows Neighborhood Place leadership to track aggregate data on related measures collected by different agencies. Each agency within Neighborhood Place tracks data and outcomes on its clients using its own data system and reports on data related to several outcomes defined in the performance measurement tool:

- Family stability (including safety and permanency),
- Healthy families,
- Economic self-sufficiency,
- Resilient student performance (including attendance), and
- Collaboration.

“

I really make it a point, that if it's a new person in the building, I don't shy away, I just pull them out, just to make them feel welcome first and foremost, because I remember when I started, I was timid . . . I didn't know who to ask what, or who I was allowed to ask because it was such a new concept.

- Staff member

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Each of these outcomes is made up of several data indicators, which may come from different partner agencies. For example, the family stability outcome has four indicators: two are collected by DCBS (recurrence of abuse, neglect, or both and reunifications), one is collected by JCPS (number of homeless students) and one by Louisville Metro Government (financial assistance expenditures).

Funding

Neighborhood Place operates on what staff describe as a cost-neutral model, meaning that ongoing operation of Neighborhood Place locations costs no more than the partner agencies would have spent to deliver the same services separately. Leadership shared that this model has been crucial to the longevity of Neighborhood Place because it insulates the organization from cuts to funding and changes in administration.

Accordingly, there is no “Neighborhood Place budget”; each partner agency allocates some of its budget for Neighborhood Place to help cover expenses. Primary funding sources for each agency are listed in Box 4. Each staff person works for a single agency, and that agency pays for the administrative costs associated with a staff member co-located at Neighborhood Place. Each agency is also responsible for the costs associated with maintaining its data system.

In addition to agency-specific funding for programmatic, staff, and data system costs, each agency contributes to the “partnership costs” of Neighborhood Place. Louisville Metro Government and JCPS each fund Neighborhood Place-specific staff (site administrators and coordinators of community support, described previously) as well as facility costs for some locations (JCPS oversees the buildings on or near school campuses, and Louisville Metro Government oversees the other locations). The state contributes funding from the Kentucky General Fund for shared operational costs, such as supplies, minor renovations to buildings, and staff training costs. Though this funding amount is relatively small, it is extremely important to Neighborhood Place operations because it is flexible and it covers expenses not allowable under other funding streams. Staff view partnership costs as similar to the costs they would incur providing services at separate locations (e.g., facilities, supplies, administrative staff), but they are pooled and shared among the partner agencies for Neighborhood Place.

Box 4. Neighborhood Place Funding Sources

Louisville Metro Government

- Community Services Block Grant
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- COVID Emergency Rental Assistance
- Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program
- Healthy Start
- City bonds
- Kentucky General Fund

Jefferson County Public Schools

- Public school funding (federal, state, and local)

Kentucky Department of Community-Based Services

- Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (TANF)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid
- Kentucky Children’s Health Insurance Program
- Kentucky Child Care Assistance Program
- Social Services Block Grant

Seven Counties Services, Inc.

- Medicaid and Medicare
- Federal, state, and local grants
- Private donations

Despite the cost-neutral approach to ongoing operations, larger up-front investment often is required to build or to renovate a space to open a new Neighborhood Place location. Partner agencies often must find alternative funding streams, such as a city bond, because the costs of building or renovating a site are larger than their regular annual budgets allow.

In addition to the funding sources that make up partner agencies' regular annual budgets, the agencies apply for grant and foundation funding as it becomes available. Staff described how Neighborhood Place was well positioned to distribute COVID-19 related funding, such as emergency rental assistance, because of its existing infrastructure and reputation in the community.

Reflections on Centralization of Services

Staff and clients identified benefits, challenges, and lessons learned associated with the Neighborhood Place model of centralizing services.

Benefits of Centralizing Services

Neighborhood Place staff and clients offered their perspectives on the range of benefits that come with a centralized approach to service delivery.

Ease of access. Staff and clients believe that providing multiple services at one location makes services easier to access for clients, particularly individuals with transportation barriers. Clients in the focus group noted how Neighborhood Place locations are on the bus line or within walking distance from the clients' homes, so they are convenient. Families can go to one location in their community to receive many services, instead of scheduling multiple appointments and traveling from office to office.

“ Someone in crisis usually cannot think straight and wrapping them with different arms holistically and having that ability to help them under one roof is extremely useful.
- Staff member ”

Connections to other services. Another perceived benefit of Neighborhood Place's model is that regardless of which service a client seeks, that person can be connected to other services, as well, to meet his or her needs. Staff assess the family members and let them know about a variety of other services for which they might be eligible. This common intake process requires a team approach, information sharing across services, and a strong community focus. If a family needs services outside Neighborhood Place, staff may suggest another organization in the community.

“ [Staff] really work hard to solve your problems, and they're good at advising. Even if they can't directly help you, they know somebody within the system.
- Client ”

Clients feel comfortable and trust staff. Clients noted their deep respect for the staff at Neighborhood Place, which allows clients to be comfortable and open up about their personal experiences and needs. Many clients appreciate the staff members' work

ethic and empathy. One client said, “Their service is good, they’re so empathetic and they really put their heart into it and they’re working very, very hard to get things turned around as quickly as they can for you.” The work of Neighborhood Place is well regarded in the community, according to clients and Community Council members, which also helps quickly establish trust between staff and new clients. Staff noted how they try to create an atmosphere where Neighborhood Place locations are “home” and staff are friendly faces.

Strong ties to the community. Neighborhood Place locations stay connected to their communities through the Community Councils. The Councils elevate the perspectives of community members and demonstrate commitment to community input. Clients view Neighborhood Place as a community institution they know and trust. Moreover, Council members aim to expand the reach of Neighborhood Place through outreach in their own networks and direct advocacy with local and state government officials to preserve Neighborhood Place funding and support.

Challenges of Centralizing Services

Neighborhood Place staff also discussed two main challenges. The clients with whom we spoke identified no challenges related to centralized services.

Limited physical space. One challenge about which Neighborhood Place staff spoke is having insufficient space to expand services. In one location, the footprint of the office is small and the level of need in the community is greater than anticipated, leading to a cramped office space with little room for growth. Staff mentioned that the lack of privacy in crowded, open offices can make opening up difficult for clients.

Staffing. All of the partner agencies face high turnover and challenges filling vacant positions, which staff attribute to the competitive job market and low wages in the public sector. Although clients had overwhelmingly positive impressions of Neighborhood Place staff, clients recognized that staff take on a lot of responsibility and face risk of burnout. They identified a need for additional staff. High turnover in turn creates challenges from a staff training perspective. Because of the time required to cross-train staff and to develop buy-in to Neighborhood Place’s centralization model, staff turnover can be particularly challenging. Neighborhood Place has moved away from an intensive, formalized staff training model in recent years in favor of a more informal onboarding process because the investment in formal training was too great when staff turned over quickly.

Lessons Learned and Plans for the Future Regarding Centralized Services

Staff shared several lessons learned over decades of centralized service provision, which aligns with the experiences of clients.

- **Frequent communication and buy-in at all levels are critical.** Structures to support collaboration allow Neighborhood Place to sustain close, supportive partnerships that outlast particular staff. Staff believe having a common mission and agreed values is central, in addition to a culture of collaboration and partnership within each location and at the leadership level in the operations committee. When staff buy into the family-centered mission of Neighborhood Place, clients feel a sense of trust, respect, and empathy. Furthermore, staff and Community Council members communicate regularly with elected

officials and agency leadership, who may be less familiar with Neighborhood Place, to build buy-in for the centralization model.

- **Neighborhood Place has an ethos of continuous improvement, bolstered by a strong commitment to the shared mission and vision.**

Neighborhood Place’s focus on improvement is especially evident in the way Neighborhood Place

has improved data sharing over time. First, the development of the ROI form allows staff across agencies to communicate about particular clients. Second, the development of the performance management tool allows for Neighborhood Place to report on key outcomes across all agencies, which helps the partners make data-driven decisions to improve the program.

- **Creating a sustainable, cost-neutral funding model has contributed to the longevity of Neighborhood Place.** Because the cost of ongoing service provision through Neighborhood Place locations is the same as it would be for partner agencies to deliver

“

It is so important that each person and agency stays outside of their silos, everybody needs to sit at the kitchen table and work with the other agencies there.

- Staff member

”

You can tell that [staff] truly care and they have a mission to help you.

- Client

”

services separately, staff describe the centralization effort as less vulnerable to program-specific funding cuts or defunding of initiatives as administration priorities shift over time. Moreover, staff from partner agencies communicate regularly about funding needs and work together to pull together funding from a variety of sources. If funding cuts are proposed, the Community Council steps in to

advocate for the Neighborhood Place model with local or state elected officials.

- **Many staff feel that having a physical space people can visit is imperative.** Some clients, such as individuals who are older or lack internet connectivity at home, may have a hard time navigating services provided remotely. Neighborhood Place locations can provide a place where people can walk in and feel welcomed, access services, and meet with staff to guide them. Staff reported that Neighborhood Place locations are important because they build community and foster collaboration between different partner agencies. Several clients with whom we spoke had been coming back to Neighborhood Place for years and noted that they prefer to go in person because they are able to develop relationships with staff over time.

At the time of the site visit, Neighborhood Place staff were just beginning to return to a hybrid of in-person and remote service provision. They were in the midst of determining what the Neighborhood Place services might look like moving forward. Many staff noted the importance of connecting with clients in person, particularly for those clients who have trouble accessing virtual services, but other staff noticed an increase in efficiency with phone-based applications. Overall, staff remain committed to a place-based model embedded in the community and they prepared to open an eighth Neighborhood Place location in spring 2022.

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