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**Evaluation of Free to
Grow, Phase II:
Detailed Profile of the
Free to Grow Project
in New York**

Final Report

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This document profiles the Free to Grow project developed by the Fort George Community Enrichment Center's Head Start program in New York City. Through a family- and community-strengthening model of primary substance abuse prevention, New York's Project Right Start extended the reach of Head Start by addressing the unique acculturation needs of its predominantly immigrant Latino client population and by preparing parents to participate actively in community efforts to address substance abuse and related issues. It built support within the community through the involvement of a committed group of Head Start parents and with the assistance of a network of partner and collaborating organizations that included specialized educational consultants, the local police precinct, and various community-based coalitions and service providers.

As result of the project, Head Start parents, staff, and partner organizations perceived that Right Start played an important role in facilitating improvements in parents' self-esteem and family management practices; connecting parents with culturally sensitive educational opportunities, information, and resources; and cultivating a spirit of civic activism by encouraging parents to advocate for preventive improvements within their community. Overall, Fort George's Free to Grow experiences provide many lessons about the benefits and challenges of introducing family- and community-focused substance abuse prevention strategies into an early childhood development program like Head Start. Some lessons relate largely to local factors, but others relate to the nature of substance abuse prevention work. Several overarching lessons from New York's experience are likely to be applicable to other Head Start and early childhood programs, including:

- C ***Promoting a Strategic Vision for and Commitment to Free to Grow.*** To implement a Free to Grow project successfully requires that the grantee organization assume ownership of Free to Grow goals and objectives; clearly communicate and reinforce the value of the new project to staff, partners, and parents; connect the content of the different project components and deliver them in an appropriately timed and sequenced

way; and assess the progress of implementation regularly and make adjustments as necessary to support continuous improvement.

- C ***Maintaining a Substance Abuse Prevention Focus.*** For educational curricula and supportive activities to be focused, innovative, and sufficiently intense, they should address in a direct and experiential way the risk and protective factors most relevant to the target population.
- C ***Involving Staff with Experience in Community Organizing and Action.*** Involving staff who are inclined toward and experienced and skilled in community organizing and community action is needed to implement Free to Grow’s community-strengthening work.
- C ***Developing Staff Capacity to Support Free to Grow Sustainability.*** Sustaining Free to Grow over time may be facilitated by developing Head Start staff capacity to lead Free to Grow project activities, rather than relying extensively on outside consultants. If consultants are employed, the focus of the contractual arrangements should be on building capacity among Head Start staff and developing materials to prepare them to lead the activities.
- C ***Cultivating Strong Partnerships to Support Free to Grow’s Community-Strengthening Work.*** A well-developed set of partners with shared goals can provide top-down support for Free to Grow’s community-strengthening efforts. Without such partnerships, community-strengthening work is more difficult. The cultivation of partnerships should be guided by a strategic plan of action and supported by an adequate investment of staff time.
- C ***Receiving Ongoing Technical Assistance.*** Free to Grow concepts are difficult to grasp. People involved in Free to Grow work need to have these concepts clearly explained and reinforced, especially when there is turnover among staff and participants. Head Start staff, especially those with little community development experience, will need to seek out regular training and technical assistance to move Head Start beyond its traditional work with families and advance Free to Grow’s community-strengthening objectives.

A. OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL FREE TO GROW DEMONSTRATION

In 1994, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation launched a five-year, \$5.4 million pilot program involving six Head Start grantees, to design and develop “model substance abuse prevention projects that will strengthen both the families and neighborhoods of economically disadvantaged preschool

children.”¹ Following a two-year planning-and-development phase (Phase I), five projects went on to complete the three-year implementation phase (Phase II). The initiative, named Free to Grow, targeted families and neighborhoods of Head Start children to create changes that would *free* young children *to grow* and flourish, while protecting them from substance abuse and the problems associated with it. The five Phase II Free to Grow pilot projects were scattered across the United States: (1) Compton, California; (2) Colorado Springs, Colorado; (3) Owensboro, Hancock County, and Christian County, Kentucky; (4) the Washington Heights section of New York City; and (5) the San Isidro ward of Canóvanas, Puerto Rico.

Free to Grow builds on a growing body of research that has recognized the importance of family and neighborhood characteristics in heightening or moderating the risk of developing substance abuse problems. Factors such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) use among family members, poor relationships and limited bonding among family members, domestic violence, and permissive or excessively punitive discipline have been shown to increase the chances that children will experience poor health and developmental outcomes, including substance abuse problems. Neighborhood characteristics such as concentrated and extreme poverty, high crime rates, prevalence of drug dealing and ATOD sales to minors, and community norms that are permissive of drug and alcohol use have also been shown to increase a child’s vulnerability.

Most prevention research and program strategies have focused on the adolescent period, when substance use and related problems begin to appear. With concerns about trends toward initiation of alcohol and drug use at earlier ages, and with heightened awareness of factors that contribute to

¹Free to Grow National Program Office. “Free to Grow: Head Start Partnerships to Promote Substance-Free Communities; Application for a Two-Year Project Development Grant.” New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University School of Public Health, November 1993.

healthy development in the earliest years, researchers and program developers are starting to look more closely at the developmental pathways of substance abuse in early childhood. Through Free to Grow, the Foundation hoped to break new ground by developing and testing comprehensive prevention models that focused on the early childhood period. Head Start, the nation's premier child development and family support program, was a natural partner in this initiative because of its work with vulnerable children and families, its focus on comprehensive and community-based strategies, and its presence in more than 1,400 communities across the nation.

The Foundation contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. to evaluate the model development and implementation process. The evaluation, a process study conducted in two phases, gathered information through site visits, telephone interviews, focus groups, and the review of grant applications and other documents the projects produced. The evaluation also drew upon documents produced by the Free to Grow national program office (NPO), housed at the Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health of Columbia University. The NPO was responsible for monitoring the projects and providing training and technical assistance.

B. THE NEW YORK FREE TO GROW PROJECT IN CONTEXT

This section highlights the community and organizational context for the Free To Grow project in New York, Project Right Start, sponsored by the Fort George Community Enrichment Center. The section that follows describes the project as it looked at the end of the pilot program and provides an overview of the training and technical assistance that staff received. Later sections highlight key changes made over the course of the pilot program, the steps taken to integrate it into Head Start and sustain it over time, and perceived changes in Right Start families and the community. We conclude with a discussion of the value the project adds to Fort George's Head Start program and of key lessons learned from New York's experiences.

1. The Fort George Community Enrichment Center and Head Start Program

The Fort George Community Enrichment Center is a small, nonprofit organization that operates its Head Start program as a delegate agency under contract with a Head Start grantee, the Agency for Child Development of the Human Resources Administration of New York City. As a delegate agency, Fort George must obtain approval from its grantee agency for most financial and resource allocation issues. Unlike the other Free to Grow grantees, Fort George did not develop or submit its Free to Grow grant application. Rather, it inherited the grant from the Bank Street College in New York and worked with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to reshape Bank Street's original grant proposal to match the objectives of the national Free to Grow pilot program.

Fort George has been operating a Head Start program for residents of Washington Heights for nearly two decades. Its densely populated urban catchment area is one square mile. Its two Head Start centers house a total of 11 classrooms that serve 346 preschool children and their families. Ninety percent of the children served meet federal poverty guidelines, and 10 percent have diagnosable disabling conditions. In addition to providing basic Head Start services for children and families, Fort George social service workers are available to assist families by, for instance, providing information, referrals, and crisis management services. Parents are also involved in their children's education through parent classroom committees that typically meet at least monthly. Each of 10 committees includes roughly 15 parents of children from a particular Head Start classroom. Fort George also offers some adult education and social welfare services for parents, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and work experience opportunities. Table 1 highlights key features of Fort George and its Head Start program.

Prior to Free to Grow, Fort George collaborated with other Washington Heights agencies and programs in the delivery of family- and child-focused services, which positioned it fairly well to sponsor a Free to Grow project. However, Fort George had little prior experience with community-organizing and development strategies. Nevertheless, during the pilot, Fort George began participating in several community-based initiatives that complemented its Free to Grow efforts. During Phase I, Fort George joined the Neighborhood Based Alliance and the Agenda for Children Tomorrow (ACT). These two initiatives, sponsored by the state and city of New York, respectively, required local residents and a wide range of agencies to work together in developing a needs assessment and strategic plan for the neighborhood. Midway through Phase II, Fort George began participating in the Parent Service Project (PSP), sponsored by the Washington Heights and Inwood (WHI) Coalition. The PSP works with local early childhood programs to coordinate service delivery and involve parents in efforts to make family and community improvements related to young children. Despite Fort George's inexperience with community development work, the significant substance abuse and related issues plaguing the neighborhood, coupled with the existence of various community-based organizations and prevention resources (highlighted below), provided an appropriate environment for piloting a Free to Grow project.

2. Community and Target Population

Washington Heights is home to a large number of recent immigrants, most from the Dominican Republic. Residents face many challenges. The community suffers from epidemic poverty, dependence on public assistance, limited educational achievement, and high school dropout rates of

TABLE 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GRANTEE AND HEAD START PROGRAM
 NEW YORK FREE TO GROW PROJECT--PROJECT RIGHT START
 NEW YORK, NEW YORK

GRANTEE AGENCY: FORT GEORGE COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT CENTER, INC.	
Agency Type	Private, nonprofit; early childhood education agency
Year Agency Established or Began Operating	1981
Programs	Head Start
Involvement with Related Demonstrations	State- and city-sponsored alliances for neighborhood needs assessments and plans Parent Service Project (locally sponsored early childhood education effort)
Funding Sources	Agency for Child Development of the Human Resources Administration of New York City (a Head Start grantee organization) Donations for special projects
HEAD START PROGRAM	
Structure	Center-based, half-day (with ongoing efforts to extend program to full-day)
Size	346 children; 11 classrooms in two sites; waiting list of more than 500 families
Program Components	Education Health and Nutrition Services Social Services Parent Involvement Program Adult Education (including ESL, work experience opportunities)
Number of Staff	55 (approximate), plus 5 AmeriCorps volunteers who provide literacy and employment-readiness support to families

about 70 percent. Limited educational, training, and employment opportunities make it hard to achieve economic stability. With recent welfare reforms, a large portion of Head Start parents are now engaged in work or work-related activities. Limited availability of child care makes the transition to work more difficult and has increased Fort George's focus on extending its Head Start program from half-day to full-day. In addition, many Head Start parents are unable to read or write in Spanish, which makes learning English a difficult task and limits employment opportunities. Housing is also expensive and in short supply; it is not uncommon for two or three families to live together in a two-bedroom apartment. Despite these issues, one of the strengths of the immigrant community is the work ethic of its members; many come to New York expecting to work long hours and displaying a creative, entrepreneurial spirit. Table 2 highlights key characteristics of the targeted Washington Heights neighborhood.

Substance Abuse and Related Problems. Overall, many newcomers find that the reality of life in New York falls far short of the dreams that propelled them to leave their homes. For some, alcohol and other drug abuse can become a way to escape feelings of disappointment and the stress of everyday life. Limited educational, economic, and recreational opportunities for youths increase not only their risk for substance abuse, but also the likelihood that they will become involved in drug trafficking and gang association. Drug dealing is often seen as an opportunity to earn much-needed income, as well as respect from peers and adults in the community. Steady demand for drugs on the part of residents from nearby affluent communities amplifies the economic benefits of the illegal drug trade.

TABLE 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WASHINGTON HEIGHTS TARGET AREA
 NEW YORK FREE TO GROW PROJECT--PROJECT RIGHT START
 NEW YORK, NEW YORK

TARGET COMMUNITY	
Catchment Area	Washington Heights area of Manhattan Community District #12 1 square mile, 1 school district Population size: 200,000+ in Community District #12 60,000+ in Washington Heights neighborhood
Population Characteristics	Predominantly low-income/working poor 90% of Head Start participants are at or under poverty Densely populated Large Latino immigrant population, mostly from the Dominican Republic Many residents do not speak English in the home (nearly 75%) High illiteracy Very large high school dropout rate (up to 70%) Many female-headed households (nearly 50%) Lack of safe and affordable housing Limited after-school programs for children Higher-than-average incidence of births to alcohol- and drug-using women Drug trafficking and easy availability of alcohol for minors Drug- and gang-related crime and violence Higher-than-average proportion of drug-related arrests and deaths

The historic antagonism that existed between police and community residents at the start of the project also contributed to the degeneration of the neighborhood from drug- and gang-related crime and violence. Although the police presence in the community and the relationship between police and local residents improved over time, residents continued to identify substance abuse and gang-related crime and violence as ongoing community concerns.

Community Voices

“[A big issue for the community is the] integration of new Latino immigrants into the mainstream and the barriers that confront them--language, lack of resources, and the lack of information about or access to resources.”

- Right Start Community Partner Representative

“The biggest concern for people living in the Washington Heights community is drugs.”

“Bar owners contribute to the problem by selling children alcohol and cigarettes.”

“Gangs have entered the community. Gang members are often involved with drugs, crime, violence. . . . Now, very young kids are identifying with gangs.”

- Right Start Parents

Community Resources. To address substance abuse and other social problems, a variety of community-based organizations, coalitions, and citizen groups provide services, support, and involvement opportunities for residents. Because the drug-related problems in Washington Heights are so serious, other prevention efforts were active during the Free to Grow project period. In particular, under sponsorship from New York State’s Schools Organized to Actively Resist substance abuse (Project SOAR), Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists (SAPIS) delivered presentations and acted as resources for children and families in local elementary schools. The WHI Coalition sponsors a communitywide substance abuse prevention effort that includes organizing summer events for youths and producing and disseminating a directory of local agencies and services, including treatment resources. Substance abuse treatment resources in the community, however, are limited to roughly two outpatient programs for adults and two child care programs that serve alcohol- and drug-exposed children. In addition, the judicial system assigned an assistant district attorney to work with Washington Heights community organizations on crime reduction and substance abuse prevention efforts, which included the Trespass Affidavit program, a confidential program for residents to report drug dealers. Related to this, the local police precinct offered a Blockwatcher/Drug Buster program for residents.

In terms of health care, local residents who have no insurance must rely largely on hospital emergency rooms as their source of primary care. Recent changes related to managed health care have alleviated part of this problem but have also presented challenges to residents in understanding how the changes affect their coverage. People who need mental health services contend with waiting lists of up to six months; those in need of bilingual services often wait longer.

C. THE FREE TO GROW MODEL

New York's Free to Grow project--Project Right Start--intended to prevent substance abuse by building resiliency and reducing risks among Head Start families and their community through parent education, immigrant support, community action, and ongoing civic involvement and activism. The project addressed the unique acculturation-related substance abuse risk and protective factors specific to Fort George's immigrant Latino population through an innovative Oral and Cultural History Program. It also extended the existing Head Start committee structure by engaging current Head Start parents in community education and action and preparing them for ongoing civic involvement. Fort George piloted the project in the Washington Heights neighborhood in northern Manhattan. Unlike the other Free to Grow grantees, Fort George did not expand its project to other neighborhoods or communities.

1. Overview of the Model and Theory of Change for Preventing Substance Abuse

Through simultaneous strategies to develop stronger and more supportive families and safer and more responsive communities, New York's Project Right Start offered an innovative, primary prevention approach for supporting children's healthy growth and development and minimizing their risks related to substance abuse and related problems. Project Right Start was operationalized

through two key types of strategies that were intended to work in combination to educate and support parents and prepare them to participate as leaders in community improvement efforts:

1. ***Family-strengthening strategies*** included a Latino immigrant-focused Oral and Cultural History Program, Women’s Education and Support Groups, and Substance Abuse Prevention Training.
2. ***Community-strengthening strategies*** included Leadership Skills Training and two Community Issues Committees that support community education and action and ongoing civic involvement by parents.

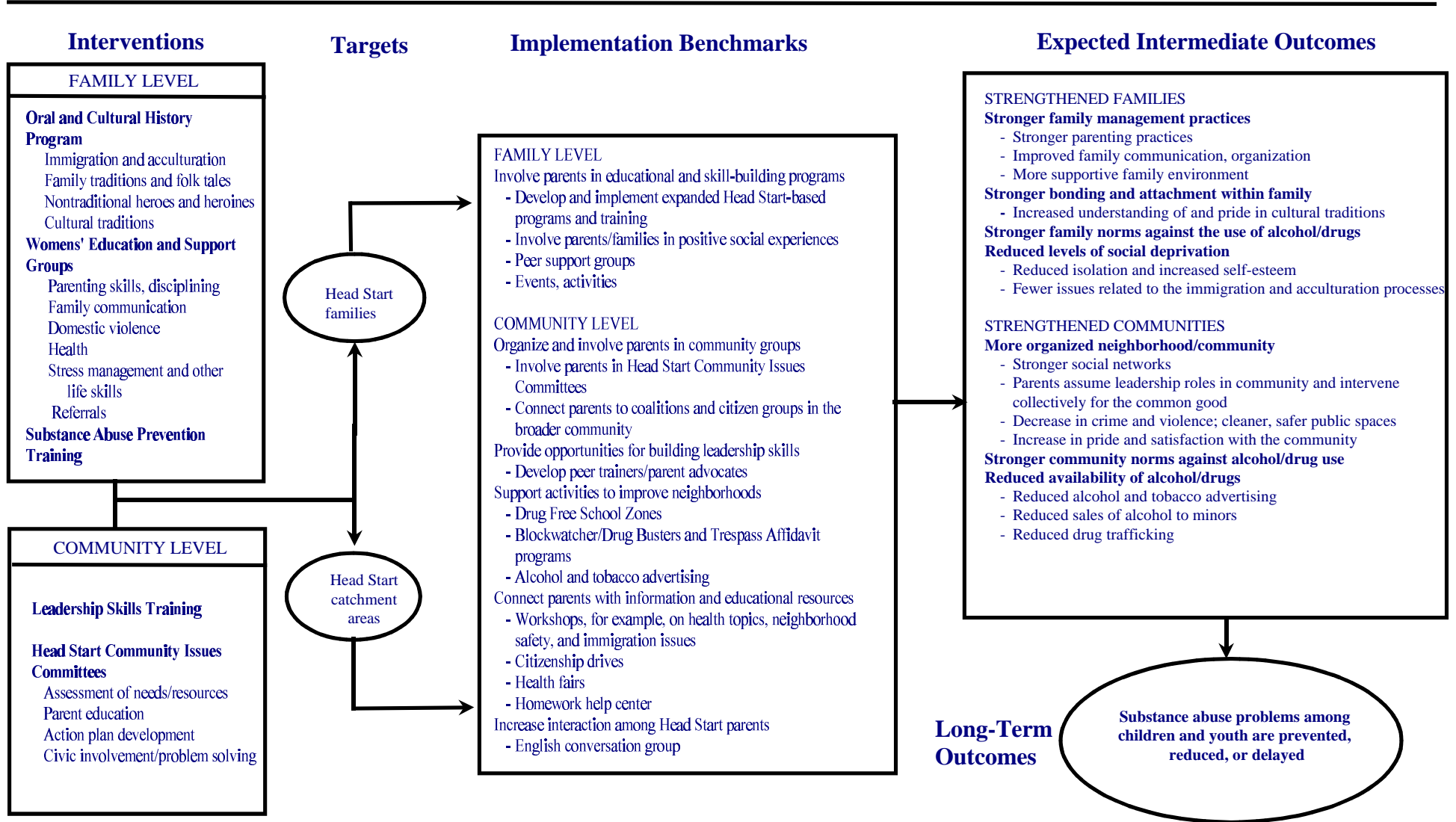
Implementing these strategies successfully and sustaining them over time depended on developing Head Start staff capacity to deliver the parent education curricula, facilitate the support groups, guide the community-strengthening efforts, and forge strong partnerships with other organizations. In total, more than one-third of current Head Start parents participated in at least one of the Right Start activities. Among those parents who also participated in the regular Head Start classroom committees, an estimated six out of seven also participated in Right Start.

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual logic model, or theory of change, that describes how Right Start was intended to strengthen families and communities by enhancing protective factors and reducing risk factors related to substance abuse. The model shows the relationship between the strategies and the various short-, intermediate-, and long-term substance abuse-related outcomes expected. Through its family-strengthening work, Right Start aimed to provide a safer, healthier, and more nurturing environment for children by helping parents address needs, improve parenting skills and family management practices, strengthen family bonding and attachment, foster strong norms against

FIGURE 1

A LOGIC MODEL FOR NEW YORK'S FREE TO GROW PROJECT

Goal: Prevent Substance Abuse Problems by Reducing Risks and Enhancing Protective Factors at the Family and Community Levels



substance use, and reduce the effects of poverty and deprivation. Similarly, through its community-strengthening work, Right Start aimed to reduce neighborhood disorganization, improve parents' civic involvement and leadership, support stronger community norms against substance abuse and for better enforcement of laws, and, ultimately, reduce the availability of alcohol and other drugs. By strengthening the environment in which children from low-income, disadvantaged families live, Right Start aimed to promote their healthy development and, over time, prevent their use of substances and other risk-taking behavior.

2. Staffing and Project Oversight

Project Right Start, integrated into the Head Start structure, was guided by the Head Start Director and Deputy Director, who were assisted by the two Head Start Education Coordinators, the two Head Start Family Service Coordinators, and six Social Service Workers (SSWs). Various paid consultant partners played a lead role in implementing the Oral and Cultural History Program and the substance abuse prevention and leadership skills training. Parent leaders provided assistance to the staff and consultants. In general, at least one parent leader was assigned to each project component and was paid a modest stipend as a sign of appreciation. The staffing structure changed over time, as the various Right Start components were integrated into Head Start. These changes are described in later sections.

3. Family-Strengthening Strategies

Right Start offered its innovative Oral and Cultural History (OCH) Program to help parents and families address the unique immigration and acculturation issues that may place them at greater risk for substance abuse and to prepare them for expanded Right Start program participation. Complementing the OCH Program, parents could participate in educational and peer support groups

and receive training on substance abuse prevention issues. These activities greatly expanded Head Start’s educational, involvement, and peer support opportunities for parents, which were generally limited prior to Right Start to periodic workshops on a predetermined set of educational, health, and parenting topics. Right Start also made Head Start more responsive to the needs of parents by tailoring yearly opportunities to issues and priorities that parents identified.

Community Voices

“[Right Start] brings information and education to parents. . . . Connecting parents with information is critical [and] Right Start helps to fill the information gap.”

“If as parents we become interested in educating ourselves so we can better educate our children, we will change our families and the community.”

- Head Start/Right Start Staff and Right Start Parents

The family-strengthening activities targeted parents with children currently in Head Start, though the OCH Program and Women’s Education and Support Groups were intended to address the needs of higher-risk parents. Parents learned about all the Right Start opportunities through flyers posted at the Head Start centers, announcements made during parent orientation, and ongoing parent committee meetings. It was common for parents to participate in more than one project component. Since meetings are held during the day, working parents and those participating in New York’s welfare reform program were generally unable to attend. Table 3 provides an overview of the family-strengthening activities, along with statistics on estimated participation in each component.

Oral and Cultural History (OCH) Program. Through several consultant partners, Right Start offered a collection of interactive and experiential workshops designed to help Latino parents increase their knowledge of and pride in their culture, explore the challenges of the immigrant acculturation process, and boost their self-esteem. The workshops also were designed to help

TABLE 3
 FAMILY-STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES
 NEW YORK FREE TO GROW PROJECT--PROJECT RIGHT START

COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION	STAFF ^a	ESTIMATED PARTICIPATION NUMBERS (% of Parents)
Oral and Cultural History Program	Interactive and experiential workshops on topics such as immigration and acculturation, family traditions and folk tales, Latino heroes and heroines, mask making, and nutrition/cooking Workshops held twice weekly during 1½- to 2-hour sessions; during the most recent program year, two groups of 15 parents met biweekly; in earlier years, groups met weekly	Consultant Partners Family Service Coordinator Social Service Worker	15-30/year (4% to 9%)
Women’s Education and Support Groups	Groups address topics such as parenting skills, family communication, domestic violence, health, stress management, and general life skills Groups meet weekly during 2-hour sessions; during the most recent program year, two groups of 15 parents met weekly	Deputy Director Social Service Worker	15-30/year (4% to 9%)
Substance Abuse Prevention Training	Training to help parents identify and address personal, family, and environmental factors that place children at risk for substance abuse Curriculum includes 8 two-hour sessions; groups of 30 trained during weekly or twice-weekly sessions	Consultant Partner Social Service Workers	60-90/year (17% to 26%)

^aOther than the consultant partners, all staff are Head Start employees. Consultants and staff are assisted by parent advocates, generally one per project component.

parents build on strengths. For example, parents were encouraged to share their personal experiences as immigrants, which typically revealed their enterprising spirit and capacity for sacrifice and hard work. Consultants facilitated the workshops, held twice weekly from November to April, and were assisted by a Head Start Family Service Coordinator and SSW. Workshops typically focused on topics in the following areas: (1) immigration and acculturation experiences, (2) family traditions and folk tales, (3) Latino Heroes and heroines, (4) Dominican mask making, and (5) nutrition and healthy ethnic cooking. Attachment A provides a summary description of each of the key topics included in the OCH Program.

Women’s Education and Support Groups (WESGs). Right Start staff worked with a variety of volunteer collaborating organizations to lead two weekly education and support groups for parents from each of the two Head Start centers. The groups offered information and discussion on specific topics that parents identified, such as parenting skills and disciplining children, family communication, health (including sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, contraception, and children’s health), domestic violence, and general life skills (such as self-esteem, stress management, budgeting, and resume writing). Parents needing ongoing, individualized attention received help from their Head Start SSW. As part of their regular Head Start responsibilities, these staff provided referrals to educational opportunities (like GED preparation and ESL classes), as well as referrals for specialized needs (such as assistance related to domestic violence.)

Each support group was organized and facilitated by a Head Start SSW, who was overseen by the Head Start Deputy Director. Collaborating organizations, consultants, and the Head Start psychologist assisted with some of the individual sessions. About one-third of parents in the groups participated for more than one year. A smaller, combined group generally continued to meet during

the summer months. The project started with one group but added another during Phase I because of the large number of interested parents.

Substance Abuse Prevention Training. Right Start offered an eight-session substance abuse prevention training curriculum to parents. During the most recent program year, Right Start trained about 90 parents from selected Head Start classroom committees. The training sessions used interactive activities and group discussion to help parents identify and address personal or family practices, as well as environmental factors that place children at risk for or enhance their resiliency to substance abuse. A consultant partner led the sessions, with assistance from two Head Start SSWs. By the end of Phase II, the consultant had trained and prepared the SSWs to lead the sessions themselves.

Topics included addictive substances and drug use paraphernalia, indicators of substance abuse, the role of drinking in the family, community norms regarding drinking, advertising and access to alcohol and tobacco, and assistance with how to listen to children, help children express their feelings, talk to children about drugs, and establish clear family rules. The sessions also provided information on identifying and accessing substance abuse treatment organizations in the community. A select group of parents received additional training to prepare them to serve as parent leaders. (Parent leaders are discussed in more detail in the section on leadership skills training.)

4. Community-Strengthening Strategies

Through its community-strengthening strategies, Right Start cultivated leadership skills among Head Start parents and encouraged them to engage in community action through the its Community Issues Committees and within the larger community. While Right Start's family-strengthening strategies built on Fort George's existing base of experience, the community-strengthening strategies

were new for the agency. These activities were open to all current Head Start parents but were best suited for those with leadership abilities and few ongoing service needs. Table 4 provides an overview of the community-strengthening activities, along with statistics on estimated participation in each component.

Community Voices

“[Head Start parents] come in [to Right Start] and they never think of themselves as able to impact change. So what [Right Start] has allowed us to do is to put people in touch with the fact that they can be an integral part of the development of the community. . . . [Over time, parents] get more involved, they have a sense they are accomplishing things, and they have some control. . . . Now they’re no longer bench-warmers, they’re in the game.”

- Right Start Community Partner Representative

Community Issues Committees. The agendas of preexisting Head Start parent committees--one focused on education and the other on health--were expanded to include prevention-focused community education and action. Through the Right Start Community Issues Committees, parents worked together to identify community issues, needs, and resources; educate themselves and other parents about these; and develop and implement activities to help address these needs or solve identified problems. In addition, given the abundance of community coalitions and citizen groups in Washington Heights, Right Start aimed to encourage and connect its parent committee members--especially those exhibiting leadership potential--to civic involvement and activist roles with these coalitions and groups, particularly after their children leave Head Start.

Both committees were facilitated by a team of two Head Start coordinators and included an active and dedicated group of between 25 and 40 parents. Unlike the Free to Grow grantees in other communities, Project Right Start did not target other community residents for the community groups, but instead focused on current Head Start parents. While some overlap exists, the parents who participated in the Community Issues Committees were generally different from those who

TABLE 4
 COMMUNITY-STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES
 NEW YORK FREE TO GROW PROJECT--PROJECT RIGHT START

COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION	STAFF ^a	ESTIMATED PARTICIPATION NUMBERS (% of Parents)
Leadership Skills Training	<p>Training to cultivate leadership skills and encourage parents to become active in community organizing and action</p> <p>7 weekly 1-hour sessions; during the most recent year, one group of 15 to 20 parents was trained in the fall and two groups of the same size were trained in the spring</p> <p>Additional “parent leader” leadership and substance abuse prevention training was conducted during earlier years</p>	<p>Consultant Partner</p> <p>Social Service Workers</p>	<p>30-40/year (9% to 12%)</p> <p>40 parent leaders trained during initiative (< 3%)</p>
Community Issues Committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Community Issues Committee • Education Community Issues Committee 	<p>Existing Head Start health and education committees were expanded to include community education and action. Key activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Access TV Segments (Phase I) - La Verbena Community Fairs (Joint activity with Education Committee, Phase I) - Alcohol and Tobacco Advertising Campaign (Phase I and II) - Saturday Homework Help Program (Phase II) - Workshops on mental health, managed health care, bacteria, lead poisoning, and substance abuse (Phase II) • Education Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lobbying for expanded community policing patrols and Drug-Free School Zone (Phase I) - Blockwatcher/Drug Buster and Trespass Affidavit programs (Phases I and II) - Citizenship drives (Phase I and II) - English Conversation Group (Phase II) - Workshops on neighborhood safety, gangs, immigration laws, and volunteer opportunities (Phase II) <p>Meetings held monthly or twice monthly, with subcommittees meeting more frequently as needed; during most recent year, 40 parents participated in the Health Committee and 25 in the Education Committee</p>	<p>Education Coordinators</p> <p>Family Service Coordinators</p> <p>Social Service Workers</p>	<p>15-40/year participated in each of two committees and in most activities (9% - 23%)</p> <p>Other activities:</p> <p>La Verbena: 400+/fair</p> <p>Saturday Homework Help Program: 50/week</p> <p>Citizenship Drives: 120/drive</p> <p>English Conversation Group: 10-15/session</p>

^aOther than the consultant partners, all staff are Head Start employees. Consultants and staff are assisted by parent advocates, generally one per project component.

participated in the OCH Program and the WESGs, and the vast majority were parents who participated during the time their children attended Head Start. A small number of former parents and friends and relatives of current parents participated in educational workshops sponsored by the committees. Meetings and activities were generally held during the day, with occasional workshops in the evenings. While not a requirement for participation, about half the committee members participated in leadership skills training, and many also participated in substance abuse prevention training. The committees were dependent on the leadership of Head Start staff for guidance and support, but parents and parent leaders played an important role in identifying issues and helping to develop and implement plans to address them.

Community Organizing and Action. Throughout the pilot, but particularly during its early phase, the Community Issues Committees developed and implemented action plans to address parent-identified community issues. In Phase I and the early part of Phase II, efforts by the Education Committee focused on community safety issues, as parents successfully lobbied the police for expanded community policing patrols near Head Start schools and advocated for extending Drug-Free School Zone (DFSZ) coverage to preschools by meeting with a state assemblyman's office and writing letters to the state legislature.

Early activities of the Health Committee focused on educating residents about substance abuse prevention and reducing the availability of alcohol and other drugs to minors. Committee members worked closely with several local organizations to develop a series of public access television segments on substance abuse topics. This included videotaping storefronts and billboards and conducting a survey of local store owners to assess compliance with alcohol and tobacco advertising regulations with respect to minors. In response to these efforts, which revealed a high level of

alcohol and tobacco advertising relative to neighboring communities, parents lobbied local merchants for the responsible promotion and sales of alcohol and tobacco products. They also lobbied the police for better enforcement of laws restricting alcohol and tobacco sales to minors.

During Phase II, the Education Committee collaborated with the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights to sponsor two citizenship drives to help residents begin the naturalization process. Later, Fort George negotiated with a collaborator--the Children's Aid Society--to offer weekly legal consultation on citizenship issues to interested parents. This committee also worked with the Literacy Assistance Center during the last year of the pilot to start an English Conversation Group for Head Start parents, which met twice each month.

In the last year of the pilot, Fort George staff and parents from the Health Committee worked with the WHI Coalition to obtain grant support for the development and ongoing implementation of a Saturday Homework Help Program for Head Start and other local families. In addition to providing tutoring assistance and homework help for children ages 4 to 13, the center provided substance abuse prevention training for both parents and children. Several Head Start SSWs helped to operate the program, which met every Saturday morning, and several parents participated regularly.

Parent Education and Community Involvement. The Community Issues Committees also sponsored a variety of workshops and training sessions to bring parents together and connect them with resources. These workshops and training sessions were the primary focus of the committee's efforts during Right Start's later years. In the last year, for example, the Health Committee sponsored workshops on mental health, managed health care, health and safety around the home, lead poisoning, and substance abuse. The Education Committee sponsored training sessions related to neighborhood safety--the police's Blockwatcher/Drug Buster Program and the District Attorney's

Trespass Affidavit Program--as well as workshops on gangs, immigration laws, and volunteer opportunities in the community. Between 25 and 50 parents typically attended these sessions. The neighborhood safety training sessions encouraged parents to work in partnership with the police to help reduce crime and violence and improve safety in the community.

During earlier years of the project, Right Start brought the larger community together by sponsoring La Verbena--an annual communitywide festival and resource fair with an anti-drug theme. La Verbena, which involved many collaborating organizations, featured parent and community speakers, information booths, and live entertainment and was typically attended by hundreds of local residents. This event fostered resident interaction, enthusiasm, and community awareness of Right Start. However, Right Start did not capitalize on its visibility to promote resident involvement in other project activities or to develop broader support for its prevention-focused community action initiatives.

Leadership Skills Training. The leadership skills training consisted of seven weekly training sessions and was designed to help Head Start parents build skills in communicating effectively, working in groups, problem solving, and resolving conflict. As part of the training, participants received a community action guide, which described local community coalitions and boards (for example, the Community School District Board and the Police Precinct Community Council), explained parliamentary procedures, and provided contact names and telephone numbers for a variety of these boards and coalitions. This guide was designed to help facilitate parents' involvement in other leadership roles in the community. However, the guide quickly became outdated, because it was not updated to reflect the ever-changing Washington Heights environment.

During the most recent program year, Right Start trained about 30 parents from selected Head Start classroom committees. In earlier program years, Right Start trained more parents, offering the

program to parents in all the classroom committees. With limits on staff and consultant availability, Right Start had to reduce the number of sessions offered. Some parents received the training early in their involvement, while others received it after having participated for several months. About half the Right Start Community Issues Committee members received training.

Additional training on leadership and substance abuse prevention topics was offered to a select group of parents interested in serving as parent leaders, usually in their second year of Right Start participation. These parents assisted with substance abuse training sessions and periodically led educational workshops for other parents. Parent leaders also helped recruit new parents to Right Start activities, coordinate guest speakers for the committees' educational sessions, and support the implementation of project activities. About 40 parent leaders were trained over the course of the pilot. Over time, the training of new parent leaders declined in importance, and in the last year, no additional parent leaders were trained.

5. Partnerships and Collaborations

Right Start helped to solidify existing collaborations and build linkages with new types of organizations, including the police and community-based coalitions. The existence of various grassroots, community-based organizations in Washington Heights facilitated the development of partnerships and collaborations to support Right Start's work. Although Right Start coordinated with numerous local organizations over the course of the project, funding and staffing shortages prevented many from being involved for more than a short time. The most active partners were paid consultants. Overall, Right Start's partners changed regularly, and almost none of the original partners were still involved at the end of the project. While partners and collaborators provided important services and support to particular Right Start components, they were generally not engaged

in strategic planning for the project, in helping to broaden and sustain community action efforts, or in facilitating parents' ongoing civic involvement and activism.

The Police and Paid Consultants as Key Partners. Partners at the end of the pilot program included the local police precinct and numerous paid consultants, none of whom had collaborated with Fort George prior to the Free to Grow pilot program. Table 5 highlights the contribution of each. In building its partnership with the police, Right Start overcame past antagonisms to develop a cooperative relationship with the police's Community Affairs Division. Over time, parents came to view the police as an important community resource and supported ongoing police efforts to foster neighborhood order and safety. The paid consultants, assisted by Fort George staff, developed and implemented the OCH Program and the leadership skills and substance abuse prevention training. Right Start's reliance on paid consultants ultimately made it harder to sustain key project components, discussed in Section D below.

Services and Periodic Assistance from Short-Term Collaborators. In addition to its partners, Right Start collaborated with numerous organizations, most of which Fort George had not worked with prior to the project. Table 6 highlights the contribution of key collaborators active in the pilot's last year. Collaborators typically offered informational sessions for the WESG or Community Issues Committees, made services available to parents, or provided support for particular activities. The vast majority volunteered their services and support, given that community education was an important part of their organizational missions. Like partners, many of the collaborators were active for only a year or two. To promote interagency coordination, early in the project, partners and collaborators participated in Right Start's Community Empowerment Network

TABLE 5

A PROFILE OF KEY PARTNERS
NEW YORK FREE TO GROW PROJECT--PROJECT RIGHT START

ORGANIZATION	PARTNER ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS
Oral and Cultural History (OCH) Consultants: ^a Center for Immigrant Families (CIF) Latinoarte Domingo Ramos Cornell Extension	Each consultant led different modules of the OCH curriculum, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigration and acculturation experiences (CIF) • Family traditions and folk tales and Latino heroines (Latinoarte) • Mask making (Domingo Ramos) • Nutrition and healthy ethnic cooking (Cornell Extension)
SAP Training Consultant: Lighty and Associates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted substance abuse prevention training for Head Start staff and parents, trained Head Start social service workers to conduct substance abuse prevention training, and helped to adapt and strengthen the training materials
Leadership Skills Training Consultant: Human Resource Development Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted leadership training for Head Start staff and parents, trained Head Start social service workers to conduct leadership training, and helped to adapt and strengthen leadership training materials
34th Police Precinct, Community Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operated community policing techniques in the Washington Heights area, which included foot and bicycle patrols and additional attention to the enforcement of alcohol and tobacco sales to minors • Conducted training workshops for Right Start Community Issues Committees, for example, on topics such as the Blockwatcher/Drug Buster program, the Trespass Affidavit program, and gang behavior and identification • Sponsored monthly police council meetings, which residents were encouraged to attend to discuss issues and share concerns

^aNumerous consultants were involved in the OCH Program over the course of the Free to Grow pilot program. While this list of OCH consultants and components is not exhaustive, it does represent the key consultants involved and components offered in recent years.

TABLE 6

**A PROFILE OF KEY COLLABORATORS
NEW YORK FREE TO GROW PROJECT--PROJECT RIGHT START**

ORGANIZATION	COLLABORATOR ROLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS
Children's Aid Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided a variety of services, including regular immigration and citizenship assistance (through weekly consultations), and hearing, vision, and dental services for children
District Attorney's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with the police to train parents to participate in the Trespass Affidavit program
Literacy Assistance Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with Head Start parents to start an English Conversation Group
Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cosponsored citizenship drives with Right Start • As part of the Right Start citizenship drives, trained Head Start/Right Start staff and participants on citizenship application procedures
Northern Manhattan Improvement Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsored community meetings and workshops on, for example, health-related topics
Victim's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through its Travelers Aid group, provided information and assistance with immigration issues • Conducted workshops on domestic violence for the Women's Education and Support Group
Washington Heights and Inwood Coalition, Particularly Its Family Partnership Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided grant support to fund Right Start's Saturday Homework Help Program and worked with Right Start staff and parents to operate the program • Funded the Parent Service Project, a community-based initiative that complemented Right Start efforts and in which Fort George participated

(CEN), which provided guidance and assistance to staff and parents. The CEN is discussed further in Section D.

6. Capacity Building via Training and Technical Assistance

Training and technical assistance, as in the other Free to Grow sites, played a significant role in helping to shape the direction and progress of New York's Project Right Start. Training in substance abuse prevention and leadership skills helped prepare Fort George staff for implementing project strategies. Supplemental trainings focused on relevant topics such as enhancing parent involvement and working with high-risk families. Moreover, staff participated in annual or semiannual grantee meetings sponsored by the Free to Grow national program office (NPO), which included training and assistance in substance abuse prevention, family service delivery, and community development. These meetings helped project staff think strategically about adjustments and refinements that could make their model and its implementation more effective.

The NPO also provided training and technical assistance--particularly on community development concepts--during annual site visits and periodic consultation visits. On average, the NPO spent more than five days working with Fort George staff each program year during its official grant period, which ended in late 1997. Ongoing technical assistance, which could have helped move its community-strengthening agenda forward, was available, but project staff did not actively seek it.

Developing and Piloting Free to Grow. Technical assistance from the NPO was most prevalent during Phase I, when it worked with staff to address early implementation challenges, including improving the intensity and scope of project strategies, addressing substantive community issues through the Community Issues Committees, and strengthening linkages with partner

organizations. Continued funding of Project Right Start was conditional on Fort George making progress on these issues. The NPO supported Fort George as it began to do so.

Enhancing Training Curricula. The NPO helped Right Start improve the intensity and scope of its training curricula by addressing risk and protective factors related to substance abuse in a more direct and experiential way. For example, with assistance from the NPO and its consultant partners, Right Start enhanced the OCH Program to address more directly the stresses that families face related to immigration and acculturation that may contribute to substance abuse problems. Similarly, Right Start worked with the NPO to enhance its substance abuse prevention training to include more interactive activities, explicit discussion of cultural norms related to substance use, and efforts to develop parent leaders who could act as trainers.

Guiding Free to Grow's Community-Strengthening Work. The NPO provided important periodic technical assistance to Fort George in developing and implementing community action plans and strengthening partnerships and collaborations. For instance, the NPO guided project staff as they strengthened ties with the police. Despite staff recognition of the potential usefulness of further technical assistance, and the ready availability of ongoing assistance from the NPO, Fort George did not view Right Start improvements as an agency priority and hence did not seek out ongoing assistance in advancing its community-strengthening agenda. Moreover, although the guidance Right Start received from a consultant partner helped staff to stay focused on developing parents' leadership skills, the project did not engage this partner more actively in guiding the community action and civic involvement efforts of the Community Issues Committees.

Over time, it is likely that Fort George recognized that the resource constraints under which it operated as a small, delegate agency limited the extent to which it could advance Right Start's community action and civic involvement goals. Still, ongoing technical assistance may have been

particularly useful in helping Right Start (1) strengthen its partnerships and collaborations and formalize its process of linking parents to other leadership and involvement opportunities in the community, and (2) institutionalize a strategic-planning process for implementing the project and regularly assessing its progress in advancing Free to Grow objectives.

D. THE EXPERIENCE OF IMPLEMENTING FREE TO GROW

To promote the sustainability of Right Start over time, Fort George integrated it into the Head Start structure, where it evolved to its present form, with several original project features diminishing in importance. This section describes key changes in Right Start's model and the steps taken to integrate the project into Head Start and sustain it over time.

1. Key Changes to the Free to Grow Model over Time

The core features of Right Start's model of parent education, immigrant support, community action, and ongoing civic involvement and activism remained fairly stable throughout the pilot program. As mentioned earlier, project staff worked with the NPO to strengthen the project's training curricula to address more fully the risk and protective factors in families' lives. Despite these enhancements, over time the scope and intensity of Right Start's work was reduced, as it was not able to maximize the role of parent leaders in the project, engage partners and collaborators in strategic-planning efforts, sustain broadly focused community action efforts, formalize linkages to support parents' ongoing civic involvement and activism, and develop and sustain a men's education and support group.

Use of parent leaders diminished in importance. Right Start's original plans involved training and actively involving parent leaders. By the project's last year, however, training for parent leaders had diminished in importance, and no new participants received the extended training.

Moreover, Right Start never clearly articulated a set of criteria for selecting suitable parent leaders. Rather, interested parents who were involved in other Right Start components generally self-selected for the extended training. In addition, although some of the former parent leaders helped lead substance abuse training sessions and workshops for other parents, their involvement in the project was relatively limited, and they typically did not remain involved once their children left Head Start. The parent leaders could have played a more active role in working with staff to advance Right Start's community action and civic involvement goals, but Fort George did not fully use them in this capacity.

The Community Empowerment Network (CEN) never fully materialized. In response to the NPO's suggestion, Fort George initiated the CEN near the end of Phase I to bring together Fort George and Right Start staff, partners and collaborators, and parent representatives from each of the Right Start components. The CEN, which met monthly, was charged with overseeing and supporting Right Start's strategic-planning and implementation efforts and helping to coordinate its community festival, La Verbena. By involving partners and collaborators in the CEN, Right Start hoped to improve its staff's knowledge of community resources, enhance parents' access to resources, and expand collaborative efforts to address community issues and support parents' ongoing involvement in the community after their children leave Head Start.

In practice, however, the purpose and objectives of the CEN were never articulated as clearly as they could have been, and partners and collaborators never became active participants in it. Over time, the CEN was integrated with Head Start's policy committee. In effect, the CEN never materialized as a mechanism to engage partners and collaborators in Right Start planning and community action efforts or to move parents into civic involvement and leadership opportunities beyond Head Start. The difficulty establishing the CEN largely reflected the ongoing problems Fort

George experienced in developing and sustaining a stable set of (nonconsultant) partners and collaborators who could lend support to Right Start's goals and help it implement its community-strengthening initiatives.

Emphasis shifted away from community organizing and action. During Phase I and the early part of Phase II, the Community Issues Committees focused most of their attention on identifying community problems and implementing community action plans to address them. Right Start then included a director and staff with experience in and an inclination toward community development work. Over time, as the committees were integrated into Head Start, fewer staff resources were devoted to the community work, and the Head Start staff responsible for guiding the committees had no community-organizing experience. By the end of the pilot, the emphasis of the committees had shifted away from community organizing and action and toward parent education and community involvement. The early advocacy efforts of the committee were not sustained. The lack of continuity in parent membership in the committees accelerated this shift in the agenda.

Linking parents to continued civic involvement and activism was not formalized. One of Right Start's objectives--moving parents from leadership roles with Right Start to civic involvement and activism within the broader community--never fully crystallized. Through its leadership training and Community Issues Committees, Right Start successfully encouraged some parents to become involved in community groups such as tenant associations, the Community School District Board, and the Police Precinct Community Council. However, with the exception of Right Start's positive relationship with the WHI Coalition's Family Partnership Committee, there was no systematic process for helping parents become civic leaders or take advantage of opportunities for activism with other community groups. Nor was there any structure for connecting the agendas of these other groups with Right Start's community-strengthening work.

For example, the project planned to move parent leaders who acted as substance abuse prevention trainers with Right Start into roles with Project SOAR in the elementary schools, but a deliberate process to involve parents in this group never materialized. Over time, SOAR's involvement with Right Start declined, as SOAR experienced funding cutbacks and organizational restructuring, which increased its difficulty coordinating with organizations like Head Start. If Right Start had been able to develop stronger community partnerships and collaborations, it may have been better able to connect its parents with civic leadership and activist roles with other organizations.

The Men's Education and Support Group was never fully implemented. To complement the education and support available to women through the WESGs, Right Start piloted a counterpart Men's Education and Support Group for the fathers of Head Start children. Fort George and Right Start staff recognized the importance of engaging fathers in project activities. Midway through the pilot, a small group of five or six fathers met several times, typically to socialize in a group setting with their children. However, Fort George experienced ongoing difficulties engaging fathers and sustaining the group. Despite periodic efforts to develop the group, it never fully materialized.

2. Integration into Head Start

During Phase I, Head Start operated Right Start as a program largely separate from Head Start. A full-time Right Start Director, who reported to the Head Start Director, oversaw the project. Initially, three full-time service coordinators, who had responsibility for the different Right Start components, assisted the Right Start Director. Over time, the Right Start Director changed hands once, the number of service coordinators fell from three to one, and Head Start staff became more involved in Right Start activities. Then, early in Phase II, all the Right Start staff positions were eliminated as Right Start was integrated into the Head Start structure and as existing Head Start staff and consultants assumed full responsibility for its components. The Head Start Director position

remained stable during the life of the project, which facilitated the transition of Right Start responsibilities to Head Start staff. Moreover, the Head Start Director showed strong leadership in shifting responsibility for Right Start components to Head Start staff and, ultimately, integrating Right Start into the Head Start structure in a manageable way. The NPO's guidance, as well as expectations established through Right Start's conditional funding arrangement, helped make integration of Right Start into Head Start an agency priority.

The integration of Right Start into Head Start supported the development of family and community partnerships that the revised Head Start performance standards required. Integration was also facilitated by turnover in the Right Start Director position and the departures of other Right Start staff, which made the Head Start Director become more engaged in the project.² The hiring of a Head Start Deputy Director early in Phase II also supported Right Start integration by allowing Fort George to devote additional staff resources to Right Start.

For integration, Fort George expanded the responsibilities of its existing Head Start management team to include leading or coordinating Right Start components. The Education and Family Service Coordinators assumed full responsibility for the Community Issues Committees, which they had previously co-facilitated with Right Start staff; the Deputy Director assumed responsibility for the WESGs; and an SSW was assigned to assist with each of the Right Start components. Fort George staff recognized that Right Start increased Head Start's responsiveness to families' needs both at home and in the community. However, to help develop staff support for Right Start--particularly the community-strengthening work of the committees--Fort George gave its coordinators \$1,000 incentive bonuses during each of two years. Although these staff appreciated the value of Right

²The Right Start Director position turned over when the director ran for and was elected to the New York State Assembly. One of the remaining Right Start staff members was hired as a consultant for a short-term period; the remaining staff were gradually phased out.

Start's community-strengthening activities, they were not experienced in or naturally inclined toward this type of work.

Instead of initially developing its own capacity, Fort George relied on numerous consultants to lead the specialized OCH Program and the substance abuse prevention and leadership training sessions. Toward the end of the pilot, two of the consultants apprenticed several SSWs to institutionalize the substance abuse prevention and leadership trainings within Head Start. Although the SSWs embraced their new responsibilities and seemed to appreciate the opportunity to cultivate new skills, their ability to continue the training over time is untested. Responsibility for leading the specialized OCH sessions was never shifted to Head Start staff.

3. Sustaining the Free to Grow Work

Fort George had firm plans in place to sustain some of the Right Start family-strengthening components and all the community-strengthening components after Free to Grow funding ended. Head Start staff planned to support the WESGs, substance abuse prevention and leadership training, and the work of the Community Issues Committees. Unless additional funding is secured from the New York City Head Start super-grantee or an outside source, the specialized OCH Program, which was delivered by several different consulting groups, may not be sustained. Table 7 summarizes whether and how Fort George planned to sustain each Right Start component.

To sustain the substance abuse prevention and leadership training, the Head Start Director was able to convey Right Start's sustainability goals to its consultants and enlist their support in apprenticing Head Start SSWs as trainers. However, because of high turnover among SSWs, Fort George will likely need to invest in consultant resources on an ongoing basis. Moreover, since the

TABLE 7
SUSTAINING THE WORK
NEW YORK FREE TO GROW PROJECT--PROJECT RIGHT START

COMPONENT	SUPPORTED BY HEAD START	SUPPORTED BY OTHERS
Oral and Cultural History Program	Uncertain, depends on Head Start securing funding for consultants	--
Women's Education and Support Groups	Fully sustainable by Head Start Deputy Director and Social Service Worker	Continued involvement by collaborators as volunteer guest speakers
Substance Abuse Prevention (SAP) Training ^a	Sustainable by Social Service Workers (2), but less training likely to be offered	Possible ongoing support from consultant partner, but depends on Head Start securing funding
Leadership Skills Training	Sustainable by Social Service Workers (2), but less training likely to be offered	Possible ongoing support from consultant partner, but depends on Head Start securing funding
Community Issues Committees	Sustainable by Education Coordinators (2) and Family Service Coordinators (2)	Continued involvement by Police Precinct and collaborators

^aHead Start will not sustain the Saturday Homework Help Program, which provides substance abuse prevention training to parents and children. Its continued operation depends on securing support from the Washington Heights and Inwood Coalition or another organization.

SSWs have limited available time to lead the training, it is unlikely that Fort George will be able to offer as much training as in the past.

Because of the specialized nature of the OCH curriculum, Fort George concluded that its own staff were not well positioned to develop the skills necessary to teach it. It also seemed that the various OCH consultants may have been reluctant to train others to deliver their material. Sustaining this component required additional funding. As a small Head Start delegate, however, Fort George has less control than Head Start grantees over resources. For example, it has to apply to its super-grantee for funds to support special projects, such as the OCH Program. At the end of the pilot, the sustainability of the OCH program was not secured, though Fort George had submitted proposals to the Head Start super-grantee, the New York State Assembly, and the Borough of Manhattan to

support both OCH and the Saturday Homework Help Program. Fort George was also exploring other private funding sources for both programs, but, if funds are available to support only one, the Saturday Homework Help Program may take precedence, because its potential appeal to all parents might make ongoing funding easier to secure.

The costs of implementing and operating the Right Start project during an initial three-year period included funding primarily for (1) the Free to Grow Director position; and (2) the consultants who delivered the OCH Program, supported the substance abuse prevention and leadership training, and apprenticed the Head Start SSWs. Key additional costs were for short-term staff incentives, staff training and ongoing technical assistance, and higher-than-average staff recruiting and administrative expenses. With Right Start integration into Head Start, the staff costs for project components that Head Start staff lead are covered through regular Head Start funds. The cost of sustaining other project components essentially equaled the cost of hiring consultants. Attachment B describes the key types of costs that another Head Start program would likely face in implementing and sustaining New York's Free to Grow model in its Head Start structure.

E. PERCEIVED CHANGES IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Although the impact of Right Start efforts was not measured formally during the pilot program, project staff, partners, and a small group of participating parents provided their perceptions of the changes they had observed within families and communities since the project began. Although these perceptions, described below, are not evidence of the effectiveness of Right Start, they give some indication of the types of outcomes the project may have influenced. Table 8 shows the magnitude of change that was perceived in the key areas that Right Start's Free to Grow logic model specified.

TABLE 8

PERCEIVED CHANGES IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES REPORTED BY
 FREE TO GROW STAFF, PARTNERS, AND PARTICIPATING PARENTS
 NEW YORK FREE TO GROW PROJECT--PROJECT RIGHT START

CHANGES SPECIFIED IN THE PROJECT'S LOGIC MODEL	MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE PERCEIVED BY FREE TO GROW STAFF, PARTNERS, AND PARTICIPANTS		
	Large	Moderate	Small
FAMILY-LEVEL			
• Improved family management practices, such as parenting skills, family communication, family support	T		
• Stronger bonding and attachment within the family	T		
• Increased understanding and pride in cultural traditions	T		
• Stronger family norms against the use of alcohol and drugs	T		
• Reduced isolation among families and increased self-esteem	T		
• Fewer individual and family issues related to immigration and acculturation		T	
COMMUNITY-LEVEL			
• Stronger leadership and advocacy skills among parents	T		
• More organized community through, for example, stronger social networks Increased involvement of parents in school, neighborhood, and community groups Increased efforts to solve community problems		T	
• Improved neighborhood and community environment, for example, cleaner and safer public spaces and reduced crime and violence		T	
• Increased pride and satisfaction with the community		T	
• Stronger community norms against alcohol/drug use		T	
• Reduced availability of alcohol/drugs		T	

1. Families

At the family level, Fort George Head Start staff and parents perceived that Right Start has had a large influence in strengthening parents and, in turn, families. They also felt that the family-strengthening activities provided parents with valuable information and regular opportunities to interact in a supportive and prosocial environment with a cohesive group of their peers. Staff and parents thought that the WESGs, in particular, greatly improved family management practices among participants, including parenting skills and family communication.

Community Voices

“[Right Start] is helping parents better educate themselves so they can be more effective in guiding their children.”

“The program has helped me a lot with my children, in my family. What I have learned has helped me handle them better, treat them better, and have more patience.”

- Right Start Parents

In addition, through its OCH Program and other activities, Right Start was perceived as having played a significant role in reducing parents’ feelings of isolation and improving their self-esteem, partly by increasing their understanding of and pride in the cultural traditions of their native country. The project was also viewed as helping families address issues of immigration and acculturation. Parents and staff felt that Right Start, through its substance abuse prevention training efforts, helped families strengthen norms against the use of alcohol and drugs. For example, parents gained a better understanding of the risks associated with substance abuse and the ways in which their use of alcohol, tobacco, and other substances could influence children. Parents were also viewed as being more comfortable talking to their children about the risks associated with substance use and abuse. Overall, parents and staff perceived that Right Start, by improving parents’ knowledge, skills, and social interactions, increased parents’ self-esteem and sense of personal empowerment.

Community Voices

“Parents who participate in [Right Start] become more energetic, more self-confident. They pursue more opportunities on their own. Also, they have a more positive, optimistic, ‘can-do’ outlook. . . . They look for solutions and are better equipped to solve problems in their families and their personal lives.”

“The Oral and Cultural History Program is important in empowering parents. Prior to participating, many parents feel alone and unempowered. The OCH Program helps to connect them with other parents.”

“I have learned so much [through Right Start], it is hard to say what has helped me the most. I don’t know what would have become of me without this program.”

- Head Start/Right Start Staff and Right Start Parents

2. Communities

Overall, Right Start was viewed as playing an important role in connecting parents with information, resources, and supports and in encouraging them to play an active role in the community. Parents and staff perceived that improvements in the self-esteem and personal empowerment of parents, partly as a result of the leadership training, prepared many of them to play leadership roles and advocate for change not only in Right Start’s Community Issues Committees, but also in the broader community. Staff and participants perceived that Right Start made a large change in cultivating a spirit of civic activism among parents. Parents were perceived as being more willing than in the past to take a stand in their communities against substance abuse by, for example, discussing substance abuse concerns with others, lobbying the police for better enforcement of substance abuse-related laws, reporting drug-dealing incidents to the police, and urging bodega owners not to sell alcohol and tobacco to minors.

Community Voices

“[Right Start has] helped to enhance parents’ leadership ability, increase their independence, and empower them to become more of an advocate for themselves and their families.”

“Those who participate (in Right Start) serve as a conduit, a guide to take the information to our friends, our homes, our neighbors.”

- Head Start/Right Start Staff

Right Start hoped to develop a more organized community by fostering stronger bonds among parents, increasing parents' civic knowledge and involvement, and increasing efforts to solve community problems. To this end, it was valued for providing the two Community Issues Committees, where active groups of parents could meet regularly to obtain community-related information, discuss issues of common concern, and work with Head Start staff and community partners and collaborators to begin addressing those concerns. The committees played an important role in connecting parents with information and resources in the community, such as those involving citizenship, and supporting neighborhood safety efforts, such as the police's Blockwatcher/Drug Buster program and the District Attorney's Trespass Affidavit program.

Community Voices

"Our community used to have little unity. Little by little . . . we have realized that we need to become united, to help one another. The voice of one person is not heard. But the voices of [many] are. We need to be united, because when we are united we become strong--porque en la union es que esta la fuerza."

- Right Start Parents

Through the advocacy efforts of the committees early in the project and parents' involvement in neighborhood safety efforts, Right Start was viewed as helping to reduce resident fear and mistrust of the police, foster police sensitivity to resident concerns, and improve understanding and communication between residents and the police. This improved relationship facilitated increased foot and bicycle patrols by the police near the Head Start centers. Moreover, through parents' communication with the police about neighborhood concerns--for example, through the Blockwatcher/Drug Buster and Trespass Affidavit programs--Right Start was viewed as helping to achieve neighborhood improvements, such as a perceived decrease in the availability of alcohol and tobacco to minors and a decline in the level of open drug dealing and violence. Parents and staff

alike reported feeling safer and more satisfied with their community. Although the addition of a second police precinct and the assignment of more police officers to the Washington Heights neighborhood was most pivotal in achieving these perceived improvements, Right Start was viewed as helping lay a solid foundation for them.

Community Voices

“The police are much more visible in the area [now than before]--both on foot and [on] bike patrols. The community is more quiet.”

“More shop owners are posting signs that indicate that they do not sell alcohol and tobacco to minors. . . and several of the smoke shops in the community have closed.”

“Police are trying to crack down--that’s why they are sending minors into the stores to see if they are sold beer or cigarettes. . . . Now that they know they can get caught, bodega owners have a stronger incentive to obey the laws about not selling to minors.”

- Right Start Parents and Head Start/Right Start Staff

Fort George also envisioned that Right Start would facilitate parents’ long-term involvement in school and community groups, particularly after their children had left Head Start. Although Right Start generally did not develop systematic and formalized processes for moving parents into civic leadership roles in the community, staff, parents, and partners all perceived that Right Start encouraged parents to become more involved on their own initiative in other community groups--including tenant associations, parent-teacher associations, community school district boards, and police-sponsored meetings.

Community Voices

“I participated in a lot of workshops while my child was in Head Start and benefited from them a lot. Since my child left Head Start, I have become much more involved in the community. Now, I’m the secretary for the PTA at my child’s school, I belong to the tenants’ association for my building. I have even gone to the school district to voice parents’ concerns about our children’s education. I’m much more active in the community.”

- Right Start Parent

F. VALUE ADDED TO HEAD START

Project Right Start not only aimed to strengthen families and the community, but also to build the capacity of Head Start to meet families' needs. Right Start's most important contributions involved allowing Head Start to expand activities and services to address the unique acculturation needs of its immigrant Latino population, provide substance abuse prevention information to parents, strengthen parents' self-esteem and parenting skills, develop civic leadership skills, and help parents become more involved in advocating for a more supportive and risk-free community for their children. In so doing, Right Start directly supported Fort George's efforts to meet the national Head Start performance standards related to family and community partnerships. Before Right Start, Head Start offered few regular and structured activities for parents. With Right Start, it became more responsive to parent and family needs and was able to involve a broader set of parents in new and valuable program activities, including those parents with leadership potential, as well as those considered at higher risk for substance abuse and related outcomes.

Community Voices

"[Right Start] has helped Head Start reach parents on a different level. It has helped parents focus on the drawbacks of substance use and abuse and has given them a language to use to talk to their children about substance abuse issues. It has helped them focus more attention on themselves and on what they can accomplish--it has helped to empower parents."

- Head Start/Right Start Staff

At the family level, Right Start introduced an interactive substance abuse prevention training curriculum for parents, which helped to increase staff and parent awareness of risk and protective factors and develop parents' skills in interacting with their children about substance abuse issues. Its Women's Education and Support Groups helped to build social bonds between parents and foster the development of stronger parenting skills and family management practices. In addition, the

innovative OCH Program, a creative addition to Head Start's work with parents, directly addressed the immigration and acculturation issues facing many higher-risk families.

With Right Start, Fort George also began to address community factors that influence child and family development. By enhancing its existing Head Start parent committee structure to focus on community education and action and ongoing civic activism, Fort George was able to address performance goals related to promoting parent involvement in community advocacy and developing community partnerships. The program learned that engaging parents in sustained community action and civic involvement is hard work--work that is facilitated not only by staff experienced in community development, but also by ongoing technical assistance.

The new focus on community also helped Fort George staff broaden their views on working with families, reinforcing the important link between healthy families and healthy communities. That is, to address families' needs more comprehensively, Head Start recognized the importance of developing community partnerships and cultivating civic leadership skills to meet the complex needs that families in high-risk communities face. Although staff faced ongoing difficulties developing stable partnerships, Right Start allowed Head Start to cultivate partnerships and collaborations with a new set of organizations, most notably the police, the District Attorney's Office, an immigrant rights organization, and prevention-focused, community-based coalitions.

G. LESSONS LEARNED TO GUIDE FUTURE EFFORTS

Through the Free to Grow pilot program, Fort George Head Start developed and implemented a promising model for substance abuse prevention. Right Start's innovative dual strategy of working simultaneously with families and the community was designed to address individual as well as environmental factors associated with resiliency and risk for substance abuse. Like the other Free to Grow grantees, New York's Project Right Start broke new ground for Head Start. Its model of

parent education, immigrant support, community action, and ongoing civic involvement and activism targeted a broad range of Head Start parents. It featured culturally sensitive activities particularly appropriate for communities with similar immigration and acculturation issues, as well as a structured substance abuse prevention training program for parents. Moreover, it has excellent potential for replication in other Head Start settings, since the model builds directly on the existing Head Start parent involvement committee structure while broadening the focus of the work to encompass community education and action and ongoing civic involvement.

Numerous challenges hindered Fort George's efforts to implement the model fully as planned, especially the community-strengthening components. Still, parents, staff, and partners perceived positive changes in families and the target neighborhood since the introduction of Right Start, which suggests that the Right Start model may be attractive to Head Start programs that serve communities with similar challenges. Fort George's experiences can provide valuable lessons to help guide future program efforts. While many contextual features and program practices facilitated the development and implementation of Right Start, other factors hindered efforts to implement the project fully as planned. These lessons are summarized in Table 9 and discussed in more detail next.

TABLE 9

IMPORTANT FACTORS INFLUENCING THE FREE TO GROW EXPERIENCE
 NEW YORK FREE TO GROW PROJECT--PROJECT RIGHT START

FACILITATING FACTORS	OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES
COMMUNITY-LEVEL	
<p>Serious and persistent community problems---for example, drug dealing, alcohol abuse, and related crime and violence--help to draw Head Start parents together.</p> <p>A neighborhood with many grassroots, community-based organizations and an activist spirit offers a suitable environment for Free to Grow.</p>	<p>The existence of many financially unstable local organizations hinders the development of strong, ongoing partnerships with well-established and influential organizations.</p>
DELEGATE AGENCY/HEAD START-LEVEL	
<p>Stability within Head Start leadership strengthens project implementation and integration into Head Start.</p> <p>Well-respected Head Start Director's involvement in local community-based coalitions facilitates service coordination and collaboration.</p>	<p>As a small Head Start delegate, limited flexibility and control over resources makes it more difficult to implement and sustain new activities.</p> <p>Financial instability reduces agency focus on Free to Grow.</p>
FAMILY-STRENGTHENING WORK	
<p>Strong consultants with innovative ideas facilitate the implementation of project components.</p> <p>Many collaborators offer interesting and useful educational workshops for parents.</p> <p>Substance abuse prevention training raises awareness of substance abuse risks and facilitates open discussion of related community issues.</p> <p>Technical assistance from the NPO helps refine and enhance curricula and better connect them to Free to Grow's substance abuse prevention objectives.</p>	<p>Reliance on consultants and limited Head Start staff capacity to facilitate the specialized Oral and Cultural History curriculum reduces the chance of sustaining it.</p> <p>Relatively frequent staff turnover among Head Start SSWs limits long-term Head Start capacity for providing substance abuse prevention training and leadership skills training.</p>

TABLE 9 (continued)

FACILITATING FACTORS	OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES
COMMUNITY-STRENGTHENING WORK	
<p>Early involvement of a full-time Free to Grow Director, particularly one experienced in community development work and a resident of the target area, helps to initiate community action efforts and develop partnerships and collaborations.</p> <p>Leadership development training reinforces Free to Grow’s underlying substance abuse prevention objectives and builds parent advocacy skills, particularly when it is provided near the beginning of the program year.</p> <p>Ongoing technical assistance supports community action efforts.</p> <p>Participation of parent leaders helps to engage an active group of parents in the Community Issues Committees.</p>	<p>Conducting community action work requires vision, strategic planning, and staff experience in community organizing and action.</p> <p>Staff benefit from intensive and ongoing training and technical assistance in community organizing, action, and civic involvement concepts.</p> <p>When parents are not viewed as resources in advancing the community-strengthening work, efforts may become more education and service oriented and less action oriented.</p> <p>Connecting parents with continued civic involvement opportunities is hindered by outdated information about community groups and activities.</p> <p>Short-term involvement of parents limits the role of parent leaders and makes sustained and broadly focused community action difficult to achieve.</p> <p>Lack of substance abuse prevention and leadership training for many Community Issue Committee members and poorly timed training for others hinder the community action work.</p>
PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS	
<p>Partnership with police sparks parent involvement in Community Issues Committees and supports their work.</p> <p>Community Issues Committees benefit from collaboration with local community coalitions and citizen groups.</p>	<p>Phasing out partner and collaborator involvement in the Community Empowerment Network weakens existing service coordination networks and commitments to Free to Grow.</p> <p>Lack of a partner relationship with elementary schools increased the difficulty of developing parent leaders and moving parents into active roles in the elementary schools.</p>

1. Facilitating Factors

Project Right Start is straightforward to implement, complementary to Head Start's mission and goals, and seemingly adaptable to other Head Start sites. Serious and persistent problems in the Washington Heights neighborhood--for instance, those related to drug dealing, alcohol use and abuse, and related crime and violence--helped draw Head Start parents together as part of Right Start. The Washington Heights neighborhood--replete with grassroots, community-based organizations and resources and an activist spirit--provided a suitable environment for Head Start to launch Right Start's educational and support activities and parent-focused community-strengthening efforts. Moreover, the leadership of an experienced Head Start Director helped to integrate Right Start into the Head Start structure in a manageable way and develop staff capacity to implement many of the activities.

At the family level, Right Start expanded and enriched Head Start by offering multiple avenues to address parents' needs and respond to their interests and concerns. Fort George was able to expand its Head Start program by offering a creative and distinctive Oral and Cultural History Program, a focused and interactive substance abuse prevention training curriculum, and a wealth of informational presentations through its education and support groups. Although some people were initially reluctant to participate in open discussions about substance abuse, Right Start's prevention training helped raise awareness about the associated risks and the steps parents and families could take to protect their children. Moreover, it helped Right Start staff and parents maintain substance abuse prevention issues as a central focus of their efforts. With assistance from the NPO and its consultants, Fort George refined its curriculum to promote greater interaction and discussion on substance abuse risk and protective factors and to address more directly the particular needs of its immigrant Head Start parents.

At the community level, Fort George Head Start had much less experience to draw on in engaging parents in community action work. In the early phases of the project, however, the involvement of a full-time Right Start Director and other Right Start staff members with experience in and a natural inclination toward community development work was important to facilitating community action initiatives, cultivating partnerships and collaborations, and helping to prepare Head Start staff to lead the committees. The fact that the Right Start Director was a Washington Heights resident also facilitated the project's engagement in community issues. In addition, guidance and technical assistance from the NPO was influential in moving Right Start's community work forward.

Once responsibility for the Community Issues Committees was transferred to Head Start staff, their participation in leadership training and the guidance they received from one of Right Start's consultant partners increased their understanding of prevention-focused community-strengthening work and further engaged them in the project. In addition, Fort George found that the leadership and substance abuse prevention trainings were important building blocks for preparing parent committee members for the community-strengthening work. The parent leaders who assisted Head Start staff were important in helping to engage a large group of parents in the committees and their activities.

By tapping into a broad range of community-based organizations in the Washington Heights area, the committees were able to sponsor a variety of educational workshops and obtain short-term assistance for implementing community action initiatives. In particular, the ongoing partnership with the police sparked parents' engagement in community issues--for example, the ongoing neighborhood safety efforts that the police and District Attorney's Office sponsored.

2. Challenges and Obstacles

Through Right Start, Fort George offered a wealth of education, support, and involvement opportunities for Head Start parents and facilitated their efforts to make family and community improvements. However, over time and for a variety of reasons, Right Start was not able to secure the long-term sustainability of its distinctive Oral and Cultural History Program, nor was it able to realize fully the community-strengthening vision of engaging parents in sustained and broadly focused community action and systematically connecting parents to civic leadership roles in the community. These implementation experiences resulted, in part, from challenges Fort George experienced both articulating a strategic vision for Right Start to staff and partners and using, on a regular basis, a strategic-planning process for guiding the implementation of the project and monitoring its progress.

Fort George's difficulties were also partly explained by its administrative environment. As a small Head Start delegate, it had limited flexibility and control in organizing resources and accessing funds, which made it difficult to find creative solutions to implementing and sustaining new activities. Moreover, periodic delays in funding from its super-grantee led to repeated financial crises; these made it difficult, for example, to pay staff on time. Since these crises became an immediate priority for Fort George, they reduced its focus on implementing Right Start activities. In addition, Fort George's resource constraints seemed to reduce the importance it attached to advancing Right Start's work relative to its other organizational goals such as extending its Head Start program from half-day to full-day.

As a small agency, Fort George also had limited capacity among its existing staff for implementing some Right Start activities, many of which required specialized skills. Hence, it

looked to various outside consultants to deliver the Oral and Cultural History Program and the substance abuse prevention and leadership training. Its reliance on outside consultants made it more difficult to connect the themes and concepts from the different Right Start activities and to help parents understand the link between these activities and the project's underlying substance abuse prevention objectives. Fort George's reliance on consultants also hindered its ability to institutionalize Right Start activities. Although it trained several SSWs to facilitate the substance abuse prevention and leadership skills training, these staff did not have time to lead sessions for all Head Start parents within a single program year. Moreover, should these staff leave the agency, as SSWs often do, Fort George would need to train additional staff to fill these roles. Since this would require the involvement of outside consultants, the continuation of this training over time is not well secured.

In terms of the community-strengthening work, after Fort George phased out the Right Start Director position, the remaining Head Start staff had virtually no experience in community organizing and action and little knowledge of available community resources. As the other Free to Grow grantees found, community-organizing and action work requires specialized staff skills that are very different from the skills required of traditional Head Start family service staff. Compounding the challenges stemming from staff inexperience, Head Start staff had limited time to devote to Right Start.

Although Fort George was able to involve an active and committed group of parents in two community-focused committees, it was unable to engage the committees in sustained and broadly focused community action. Since Fort George generally limited parents' involvement in Right Start to the period when their children attended Head Start (typically one year), "graduate" parents and other residents had very limited involvement in Right Start, and a process of continuous civic

leadership development never became well established. Over time, the focus of the Community Issues Committees' work shifted to sponsoring short-term educational activities for parents. This focus on community education was still a nice complement to Right Start efforts to move parents into other civic involvement and activist roles with local community coalitions, citizen groups, and boards. However, the project was largely unable to formalize mechanisms to move parents into other civic involvement and activist roles or to connect the community action agendas of other groups with those of the Right Start committees. Thus, it missed opportunities to capitalize fully on its parents' enthusiasm for community issues and maximize their use of newly developed leadership skills for the benefit of the community. Fort George was also reluctant to seek out available technical assistance from the NPO to help advance its community-strengthening agenda. Ongoing technical assistance would likely have helped to intensify and broaden the scope of Right Start's community work.

Partnerships can be used to leverage support for the community-strengthening work. However, the unstable funding situation that many local organizations faced aggravated Right Start's difficulties developing and maintaining relationships to support its community work. For example, that local organizations were apt to change their priorities according to city and state funding priorities made it more difficult for Right Start to coordinate agendas and develop long-lasting partnerships. Two key factors exacerbated this challenge: (1) lack of a comprehensive service organization in Washington Heights, and (2) lack of a well-functioning Right Start Community Empowerment Network. Moreover, although support for children's transition from Head Start to elementary school was an agency priority, Fort George was not able to promote this goal through Right Start. Rather, it found building relationships with elementary schools difficult, partly because

the schools had no directive during the project period to collaborate with community organizations such as Head Start.

Despite the challenges Fort George faced implementing and sustaining Project Right Start, its model offers a sound and promising approach to substance abuse prevention in a Head Start context. However, during the pilot period, Fort George could have addressed its challenges better and improved the implementation of its project by, for example:

- C Clearly articulating and continually reinforcing a strategic plan for Right Start to staff, partners, and parent participants
- C Better connecting the content of the different project components to reinforce the project's substance abuse prevention objectives
- C Targeting project components to particular types of parents by, for example, recruiting higher-risk parents for the Oral and Cultural History Program and the Women's Education and Support Groups and recruiting parents with leadership potential for the Community Issues Committees
- C Improving the timing and sequence of project activities, for example, so that all parents on the Community Issues Committees received substance abuse prevention and leadership training and that they received it early in the program year, when it would be most useful
- C Appointing one or two staff inclined toward community-strengthening work to specialize in community organizing and action and assume responsibility for supporting the committees, updating the community action guide, and cultivating partnerships and collaborations
- C Providing ongoing training and technical assistance in civic leadership and community development to staff involved with the Right Start community-strengthening work
- C Training additional parent leaders and involving them more proactively in the different project components during and after the time their children are attending Head Start

ATTACHMENT A

ORAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY GROUP:
SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF KEY WORKSHOP COMPONENTS
NEW YORK FREE TO GROW PROJECT--PROJECT RIGHT START

ORAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY

Immigration and Acculturation. Through a series of 10 workshops, parents discuss and address the issues and stresses related to immigration and the process of acculturation that may place families at higher risk for substance abuse. Workshops also help parents build on the strengths they possess as immigrants--for example, parents are encouraged to share their personal experiences as immigrants, which typically reveal their enterprising spirit and capacity for sacrifice and hard work. Particular sessions focus on immigrant experiences such as dislocation, lack of support, limited knowledge of institutions, different gender roles in the United States, and the importance of solidarity and community activism.

Family Traditions and Folk Tales. Several exercises help parents develop skills in storytelling and oral history and identify personal strengths. For example, participants are asked to bring in old family photographs and compose a personal family history. As part of their written histories--developed as children's storybooks--parents are asked to highlight lessons learned and personal actions and qualities of which they are proud.

Heroes/Heroines. Parents attend presentations on political and nontraditional heroic Latino figures. Afterward, parents complete exercises designed to help them identify personal traits they have in common with these figures.

Mask Making. Parents learn about the historical and cultural significance of traditional Dominican carnival masks and mask-making techniques, and each parent makes a mask.

Nutrition and Healthy Ethnic Cooking. Parents learn about the nutritional value of different foods and learn how to cook different types of healthy ethnic meals.

ATTACHMENT B

DESCRIPTION OF KEY COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTING AND OPERATING
THE NEW YORK FREE TO GROW MODEL IN A HEAD START CONTEXT

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Key Assumptions	<p>Head Start program: 346 children 2 Head Start centers in one neighborhood 55 total staff (approximate)</p>
Staff	<p>Free to Grow Coordinator A new position is needed--full-time in the first two years of implementation and part-time in the third year. Key responsibilities include guiding the implementation of project components, developing partnerships and collaborations, and preparing Head Start staff to assume responsibility for the components.</p> <p>Administrative Assistant Part-time administrative assistant needed, roughly 20 percent full-time-equivalent, on average, during each of three years.</p> <p>Head Start Director Cost of this position fully covered by regular Head Start funds. The Head Start Director spends roughly 4 hours/month, on average, on Free to Grow oversight and management support.</p> <p>Head Start Deputy Director Cost of this position is fully covered by regular Head Start funds. The Deputy Director spends roughly 2 to 4 days/month, on average, on Free to Grow management support and involvement with the Women's Education and Support Groups.</p> <p>Head Start Education Coordinators and Family Service Coordinators Cost of these positions fully covered by regular Head Start funds, as Free to Grow responsibilities were built into job descriptions. To facilitate involvement in Free to Grow, coordinators received incentive payments of \$1,000/year for two years.</p> <p>Head Start Social Service Workers Cost of these positions fully covered by regular Head Start funds, as Free to Grow responsibilities were built into job descriptions.</p>
Consultants	<p>Oral and Cultural History Consultants for a minimum of three years at a total estimated cost of \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year.</p> <p>SAP consultant for three years, including about 12 days/year during the first two years of implementation and 1 to 2 days for technical assistance during the third year (assumes about 30 parents trained per year, 10 each during 3 training sessions).</p> <p>Leadership consultant for three years, including about 8 days/year during the first two years of implementation and 1 to 2 days for technical assistance during the third year (assumes about 30 parents trained per year, 10 each during 3 training sessions).</p>

ATTACHMENT B (continued)

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Training and Technical Assistance	<p>Estimated total of 6 to 12 days to orient and train Head Start management team, including the Head Start Director, Deputy Director, and Education and Family Service Coordinators. All the costs to train other staff are covered by regular Head Start training funds.</p> <p>Periodic technical assistance on how to lead project components and conduct community development work through the Community Issues Committees</p>
Staff Recruitment Costs	Higher-than-average level of effort to recruit and hire Free to Grow Coordinator
Other Direct Costs and Occasional Costs	<p>Consultants to assist with Free to Grow community assessment efforts</p> <p>Occasional stipends paid to Women’s Education and Support Group guest speakers</p> <p>Higher-than-average meeting expenses and postage costs</p>