

4th Annual NCACDSS Best Practices Awards Nomination Form

Category: PCC#4 Tier 3
Profiles in Community Collaboration

Project Title: Partnership in Action

Please complete the criteria below in the space provided. Answer all questions completely to maximize your score.

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1. **Project/Program Summary:** Briefly summarize the project's history, purpose, timeline and budget.

History/Purpose: The mission of the Faith Connection Program is to intentionally connect the resources of our faith partners and faith based community systems for families served through the programs and services of the Wilson County Department of Social Services. Faith Connections was designed to eliminate duplication of services, screening and intake of the faith community in order to increase efficiency, streamline resources as well as streamline the process for persons needing crisis financial assistance. The Faith Connection Program allows the Department of Social Services staff to seek faith community resources on behalf of their customers/clients through an efficient and predictable referral process. Many of the requests and resources provided through Faith Connections is a result of unavailability or ineligibility of customers due to income and eligibility guidelines for state and federal funds. Many times the family is still facing a crisis or hardship and Faith Connections is a resource that provides immediate assistance. The following are just a few of the many services/resources provided through the Faith Connections Program.

✳️Local Churches and Community Partners link with the Department of Social Services staff to help meet the needs of families in the community through our Faith Connections Program. The following are just a few of the needs met by the Faith Connection Program:

- Educational tools needed for foster children
- Donated cars for former work first families that have made the transition from cash assistance to work
- Beds/cribs for children involved with Child Protective Services
- Partnership with local furniture store to provide free/reduced furniture to needy families
- Prescription medication for older adults
- Partnership with local Dentist to provide free/reduced dental work for needy clients
- YMCA scholarships for gym membership to needy families
- Bicycles to transport a non-custodial parent to work so child support obligations can be met
- Educational assistance for domestic violence victims
- Assistance with Housing and Utilities for low income working families
- Assistance with purchase of uniforms/tools/materials needed for work
- Appliances (refrigerators, washers, dryers, stoves)
- Clothing for children being taken into custody by Child Protective Services
- Telephone Alert for Homebound Adults

- Temporary Housing for Homeless/Foster Children
- Picture IDs and Criminal checks for employment purposes
- Churches/Sunday School classes adopting families at Christmas
- Hurricane Katrina Relief for people who relocated to Wilson County

Timeline: The Wilson County Department of Social Services' Faith Based Initiative began in 1999 and has evolved into our Faith Connections Program. Faith Connections has grown and flourished in the last 3 years.

Budget: The Faith Initiative began with a salary for a Faith and Business Community Coordinator; this was a contract position and the Faith Connection Program has grown tremendously. We have no "budget" for the program; we feel God has deep pockets and the process is set up so partners and churches are billed for services rendered to the community.

The Faith Connections process is truly a "Partnership in Action" for Wilson County. The program has improved productivity by supplementing and leveraging federal/state/and local government monies with the faith community donations to provide families with comprehensive resources to alleviate crisis situations; that if left, could turn into a downward spiral of hopelessness. It allows social workers the flexibility and leverage to be able to offer more comprehensive solutions for families so that families in crisis can truly overcome obstacles. Families no longer have to go from church to church. They are directed to DSS and if services are needed a referral to Faith Connections is made. The Faith Connections Coordinator reviews the request and processes assistance within a 24 hour time frame. Faith Connections has served work first clients, foster parents, foster children, elderly adults, single parents, non-custodial parents, disabled adults and students. By serving the DSS population, we have saved our agency time and money by improving the quality of services we offer, pooling community resources and providing a comprehensive support for customers. Faith Connections developed an efficient referral process involving multiple faith and community partners, which has minimized duplication of services and fraud.

Innovation: We are not aware of a streamlined faith assistance process; within a DSS, in the State.

2. **Project Success and Impact:** What were the objectives? How well were they met? How widespread is the impact of the project/program? What is the anticipated long-term impact? Did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, non-profits, businesses, etc.? Describe the outcome of the collaboration.

This program was created to combine and leverage multiple faith based community resources to better meet the needs of Wilson County residents and streamline the intake and financial assistance process for many of our faith community partners/churches in our community. The Faith Connections Program has streamlined and minimized duplication of services and fraud as well as uniting community partners to achieve the goal of maximizing public, private, faith and community resources. This program now offers a whole new approach to comprehensive service to families in need. Social Workers truly have a multitude of resources with just one phone call. If government resources are exhausted and a family is in need the worker will access the Faith Connection program. Even when government resources are not exhausted, but there is a limit/stipulation on assistance, the worker will pool resources with Faith Connection funding to make sure the customers need is met ultimately providing a higher level of service to the client and avoiding future cost by completely and efficiently eliminating the crisis situation. This program has minimized the intake and "uncertainty" of local churches who were constantly providing financial

assistance to families/individuals who approach their churches. Many times the churches would assist someone with food only to find out that there was really no crisis or that they were already receiving food assistance; the streamlined process has provided a comprehensive intake, assessment and social work aspect to assisting people in need in our community. The process has taken a tremendous burden off churches and faith partners that were not equipped to provide these services to needy families.

Faith Connections Results:

- Eliminated the uncertainty for faith community in providing immediate “hand” outs.

January – December 2005

- Dollar Amount Received from Faith Partnerships \$14,732.77
- Faith Connection Referrals for Assistance 297

January –May 2006

- Dollar Amount Received from Faith Partnerships \$10,940.04
- Faith Connection Referrals for Assistance 159

TOTAL DOLLAR AMOUNT SINCE JANUARY 2005 \$25,672.81

TOTAL REFERRALS SINCE JANUARY 2004 817

TOTAL DONATED CARS FOR WORK SINCE 2000 25

TOTAL FAITH PARTNERS 13

3. **Project Effort and Difficulty:** How well did the program use limited resources? What obstacles or challenges did you overcome? How was this done?

Faith Connections leverages partnerships to meet the needs of Wilson County Residents; that is how the program utilizes the resources of the community. It is always a challenge to build a successful program and convince other community partners to work together to serve the community in a more efficient manner. We simply made a difference one client at a time. We had a few key partners that were committed to the vision and dream of our agency and as we had small successes others took note of the wonderful program and they wanted to be a part of Success. The program is a win/win for everyone involved; that is another critical aspect of the growth of the program.

Formula for Success/ Critical Components:

- Identify Key Community Leaders
- Formulate comprehensive plan with clear goals and objectives
- Engage and communicate with key leaders to sell the program
- Explain what you need from community partners
- Make Key Leaders a part of the process
- Clearly communicate roles
- Show partners how the process can benefit everyone
- Incorporate clear guidelines for partners, staff, and clients to follow to obtain resources
- Communicate! Communicate! Communicate!
- Celebrate! Celebrate! Celebrate!
- Track Goals and Results
- Make a Difference One Client at a Time!

4. **Ability to Replicate Project:** Can this project be duplicated in other counties? What could counties do to minimize obstacles and problems?

The Faith Connections Program is a shining example of a successful Faith Initiative. The program has many supporters and has received praise and recognition in the community. The Faith Initiative was started by the Wilson County Department of Social Services in 1999 and has evolved into a streamlined, efficient and successful partnership between the faith community, faith based organizations, businesses, customers and DSS. Counties can use the *Formula for Success* to minimize obstacles and problems. *Faith Connections*, could be a wonderful blueprint for any county seeking to begin a faith initiative. It is an honor and privilege to share this wonderful outreach with other counties; thank you for the opportunity to submit this application.