MARICOPA FAMILY SUPPORT ALLIANCE

2014

A Survey of Perceived Benefits of MFSA Participation

Contents

Summary

In response to **Maricopa Family Support Alliance's** (MFSA) mission "to coordinate and expand the network of support agencies working to provide the resources and aid necessary for families in need to be successful and independent," the *Outreach, Intake and Referral Subcommittee* has attempted to determine if the MFSA has had an impact on individuals providing support to families in the community. Through a short email survey of 290 participants that participated in MFSA activities, the responses of 151 service providers constitute the data in this report.

The results were overwhelming positive, suggesting that more than two thirds of the respondents rated participation in MFSA to be of *Great Benefit*. When queried as to the MFSA's ability to assist local family support providers to be *more effective*, 57 percent responded positively, while 42 percent remain *unsure*. However, a similar question indicated that 74 percent of participants rated MFSA's trainings as *very beneficial* for increasing the capacity to provide family support. Thus, a follow-up question for future surveys may include identification of which MFSA trainings, skills, or strategies will increase the effectiveness of family support providers.

Methodology

After completing three years of work on universal referral tool, the Outreach, Intake and Referral Subcommittee elected to tackle a final outreach activity to determine the extent to which individuals have derived benefit from the MFSA and if the MFSA is having an impact on the effectiveness of family support professionals in Maricopa County. Therefore, the subcommittee drafted an email survey that was 315 individual addresses, linked to individuals that had "ever" attended any MFSA sponsored trainings, events, or meetings. Two hundred ninety were viable emails; while 21 addresses were no longer viable and four were blocked by internet service providers and the emails bounced back.

Five questions were developed to organize respondents by job types and experience with MFAS and to measure 'benefit' and 'effectiveness'. Questions one and two were designed to identify the role of each respondent within their organization and the number and type of events they attended. Following these general questions respondents were given seven plausible attributes of MFSA membership based on the organization's mission statement and contributions of the committee (see survey) and asked to rate the MFSA's contribution to each using a three-level Likert style response. An open ended-question followed in which respondents were invited to idnetify other benefits of MFSA membership. Again using a three-level Likert style response, the final question pointedly asked if family support providers are more effectively meeting the needs of families as a result of the MFSA.

After thorough review by committee members and the chairperson, the survey was loaded into an online tool and initially emailed on 29 May 2014 with reminders to non-respondents sent after the first week, and at two-week intervals thereafter on third, fifth and seventh weeks; after which, 152 valid responses were received and 139 non-responses remained. Thus, 52% of those invited to take the survey complied. Based on recent guidelines for acceptable response rates (*Instructional Assessment Resources.* https://www.utexas.edu/academic/ctl/ assessment/iar/teaching/gather/method/survey-Response.php. Retrieved: 22 July 2014.), emailed survey return rates of 40% are considered average, 50% good, and 60% very good. Furthermore, high rates of response are more critical when the survey's purpose is to measure effects and make inferences to larger populations and less important when the purpose is to gain insight into an event or organization, as was our purpose (Hamilton, 2003). Given a confidence level of 95%, an actual population of 290 non-random individuals and sample size of 151, the estimated confidence interval or margin of error of the survey responses is 5.53.

Results
Question 1. What is your role in your organization?

Of interest to the subcommittee was who attended MFSA events. The graphic below illustrates that two-thirds of participation was split between agency program managers and staff that provide services to families; while 20 percent identified as executive managers. One person identified herself as a researcher. The 'Other' category consisted predominantly of volunteers.

A group/role that is infrequently included in professional trainings is Administrative Support Personnel, which comprised five percent of the total participation in MFSA meetings and events. In the future, consideration of their unique needs may be considered for trainings such as communication with consumers and other staff members, services across the community, or standards for service provision.
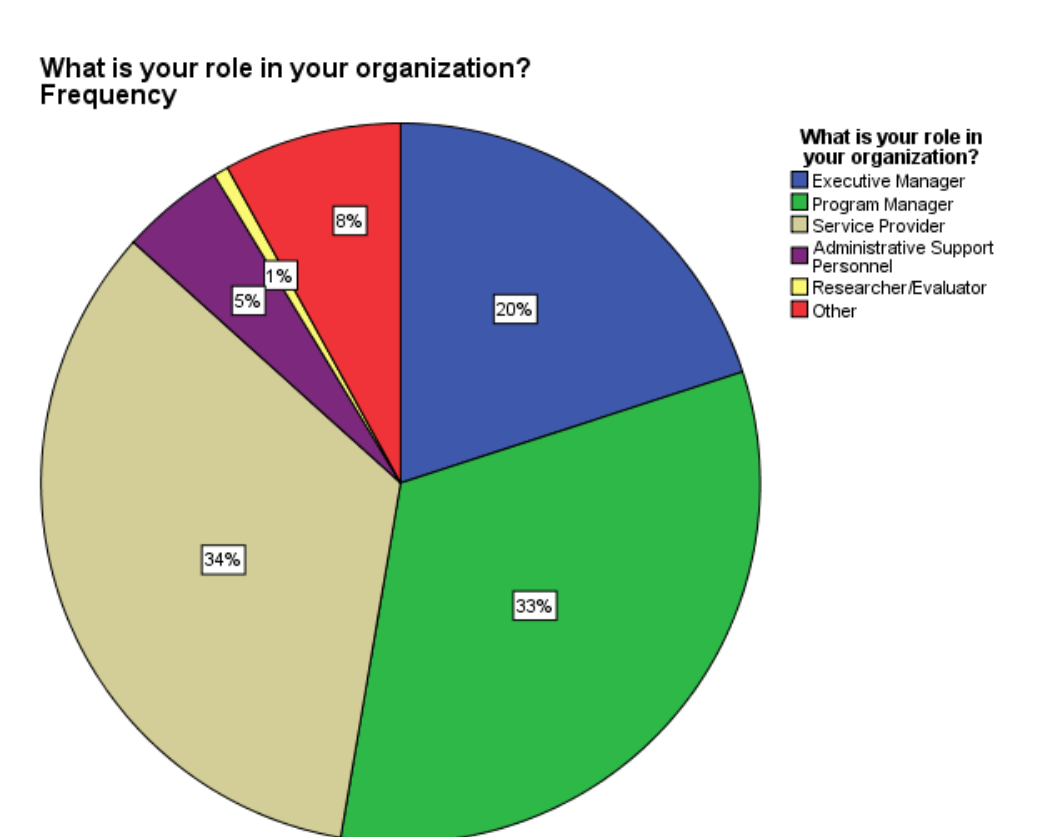

Figure 1 Percentage of Attendance by Organizational Role

Question 2. How many times have you attended each of the following types of events?

Table one illustrates the number and percent of participation at events. Then, tables, two through five, illustrate event types (*Training, Membership, Subcommittee, Steering Committee*) by participant types (Executive Manager, Program Manager, Service Provider, Support Personnel, Researcher, Other). Examination of event attendance suggests that highest frequency of participation occurred at Training Events, followed by General Membership meetings and the least at Steering Committee meetings; and, that the incidence of Steering Committee meetings was typically a onetime event. The team of persons that continued to attend the Steering Committee was likely the core group of senior administrators who were most committed to the mission of the MFSA. Training events had the greatest overall attendance and the greatest frequency; while, the steering committee initially had a big bump in attendance but due to the structure the fledgling organization was trying to develop, had a low but steady attendance of its core guiding members. The same may be true of the core subcommittees. Unfortunately, the Outreach, Intake, and Referral subcommittee did not think to examine the individual subcommittee attendance, which might prove helpful in the future.

Table 1. Attendance at Events

Event Type	Frequency of Attendance			
	0-1 time	2-4 times	5 or more	Total
	42.55%	46.81%	10.64%	100%
Training Events	60	66	15	141
	46.67%	30.83%	22.50%	100%
General Membership Meetings	56	37	27	120
	68.10%	12.07%	19.83%	100%
Subcommittee Meetings	79	14	23	116
	85.19%	5.56%	9.26%	100%
Steering Committee Meetings	92	6	10	108
Total	287	123	75	485

What the above data do not show are the total number of events sponsored or specific attendance at each event, as these data were not available. However, these data may be of interest to the sub- and steering committees in the future as they plan events to meet the interests of participants by 'type'.

Table 2. Role in Organization by Training Events

	Training Events			Total
	0-1 time	2-4 times	5 or more	
Executive Manager	14	10	2	27
Program Manager	17	25	4	46
Service Provider	21	24	5	50
Administrative Support Personnel	3	3	1	7
Researcher/Evaluator	0	1	0	1
Other	4	2	3	9
Total	59	65	15	140

As previously indicated, Training events garnered the greatest attendance; however, attendance fell off precipitously after four sessions. Thus, the *audience appeal* of the fourth and fifth training may be of interest to the committees planning training.

Table 3. Role in Organization by General Membership Meetings

	General Membership Meetings		
	0-1 time	2-4 times	5 or more
Executive Manager	6	7	12
Program Manager	6	18	9
Service Provider	2	8	3
Administrative Support Personnel	4	0	0
Researcher/Evaluator	0	0	1
Other	4	4	1
Total	55	37	26

Trends in attendance at General Membership meetings may indicate that senior management (executive and program) may find MFSA participation of greater value as more meetings were attended; whereas, direct care and administrative support personnel may find less value in these meetings or cannot afford time away from work to attend these meetings. If it is the desire of the MFSA to engage staff at all levels, then attempts or strategies to recruit and retain staff across levels should be examined.

Table 4. Role in Organization by Subcommittee Meetings

	Subcommittee Meetings			Total
	0-1 time	2-4 times	5 or more	
Executive Manager	13	2	8	23
Program Manager	27	7	7	41
Service Provider	27	3	5	36
Administrative Support Personnel	4	0	1	5
Researcher/Evaluator	0	0	1	1
Other	7	2	0	10
Total	78	14	22	116

Initial high attendance at Subcommittee meetings may suggest that participants were 'trying out' different committees to find the right fit or interest level as attendance fell off then appears to stabilize with core members committing and participating in the activities of various subcommittees. As much of the significant work of the MFSA, during the first three years, was accomplished through the sub committees, it may be of interest to examine how to maintain membership and strong leadership within this subcommittee structure.

Table 5. Role in Organization by Steering Committee Meetings

	Steering Committee Meetings			Total
	0-1 time	2-4 times	5 or more	
Executive Manager	19	1	4	24
Program Manager	33	1	2	37
Service Provider	29	3	2	35
Administrative Support Personnel	3	1	1	5
Researcher/Evaluator	1	0	0	1
Other	6	0	1	8
Total	91	6	10	110

The former observation of Subcommittee membership may also apply to the Steering Committee. Initially there may have been general interest in the direction and structure of the MFSA; however, when participants had made their decisions and found their comfort level with the MFSA, a core group of leaders, the majority of whom represented agency leadership (executive or program), appears to have emerged and attended five or more meetings. These observations may prove helpful when identifying new leaders as the organization moves into its next phase of development.

Question 3. To what extent do you feel that each of the following is a benefit of participating in the MFS Alliance?

As the mission of the Maricopa Family Support Alliance (MFSA) is to "coordinate and expand the network of support agencies working to provide the resources and aid necessary for families in need to be successful and independent." It was the Outreach, Intake and Referral Subcommittee's intent of to capture *levels of benefit* to the preparation of family service providers and to *building a network* of provider agencies that could work together to more effectively serve the needs of Maricopa County citizens. Thus, responses to Question 3 are likely most informative to the committees and to Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust.

The question posed seven non-exclusive (possibly related) attributes of possible benefit to which respondents were asked to rate each attribute as *No Benefit, Moderate Benefit* and *Great Benefit.* Figure 2 illustrates the average rating The Average Rating is the mathematical average of responses ranging from one to three of each of the attributes using the three-point Likert-style scale previously described. Scores closer to '3' indicate ratings of greater benefit. Table 6 provides a deeper look at the responses as it illustrates the actual number of participant responses and percentages of responses to each of the attributes.

One hundred forty-one participants responded to all seven attributes of Question 3; eleven skipped the item entirely. Examination of the results suggests that, with the exception of *Developing Friendship*, greater than two thirds of the MFSA respondents found participation to be very beneficial on five of the six attributes. Again, with the exception of *Developing Friendships*, very few participants, less than four percent, rated participation as 'No Benefit'.

The highest rated statements, both directly aligned with the Alliance mission, suggest that MFSA has been highly beneficial (74%) with respect to increasing the capacity of members to provide family support **and** in creating collaborative relationships and strengthening relationships among member organizations (74%). Similar ratings were given to the attribute *Increased Awareness/Understanding Of Member Organizations And Who They Serve*, which suggests that *understanding* one another is essential to

creating collaborative relationships and working together to impact larger system challenges; thus, addressing the ultimate goal of the MFSA.

It may be that as the ratings of these four statements are so similar they are *over aligned*, or to similar, and may reflect the same construct such as 'network building'. If so, the similarity of responses is understandable.

The second lowest rated statement is also related to *Personal Relationship Building*. Sixty-two percent rated MFSA participation as very beneficial for *Building Individual Professional Relationships.* However, this may actually be more aligned with the responses given to working together, opportunities to expand interdisciplinary partnerships, creating or strengthening relationships, or increased awareness and understanding of other members' services.

With respect to the low rating given to *Developing Friendships,* this may be explained by the limited number of events that participants attended (average less than two), thus, were not given the opportunity to develop new friendships; or that they did not perceive the need or desire to engage in friendship building activities during work related activities.

The subcommittee was interested in knowing if ratings of *Benefit* on each of the six attributes varied by Role of Attendee (within member organization) or by the Frequency of Attendance at events (3 levels). Therefore, statistical means tests were conducted to detect if significant differences exist. However, statistical analysis did not demonstrate differences at the .05 level in *Benefit* ratings by Role or Frequency.
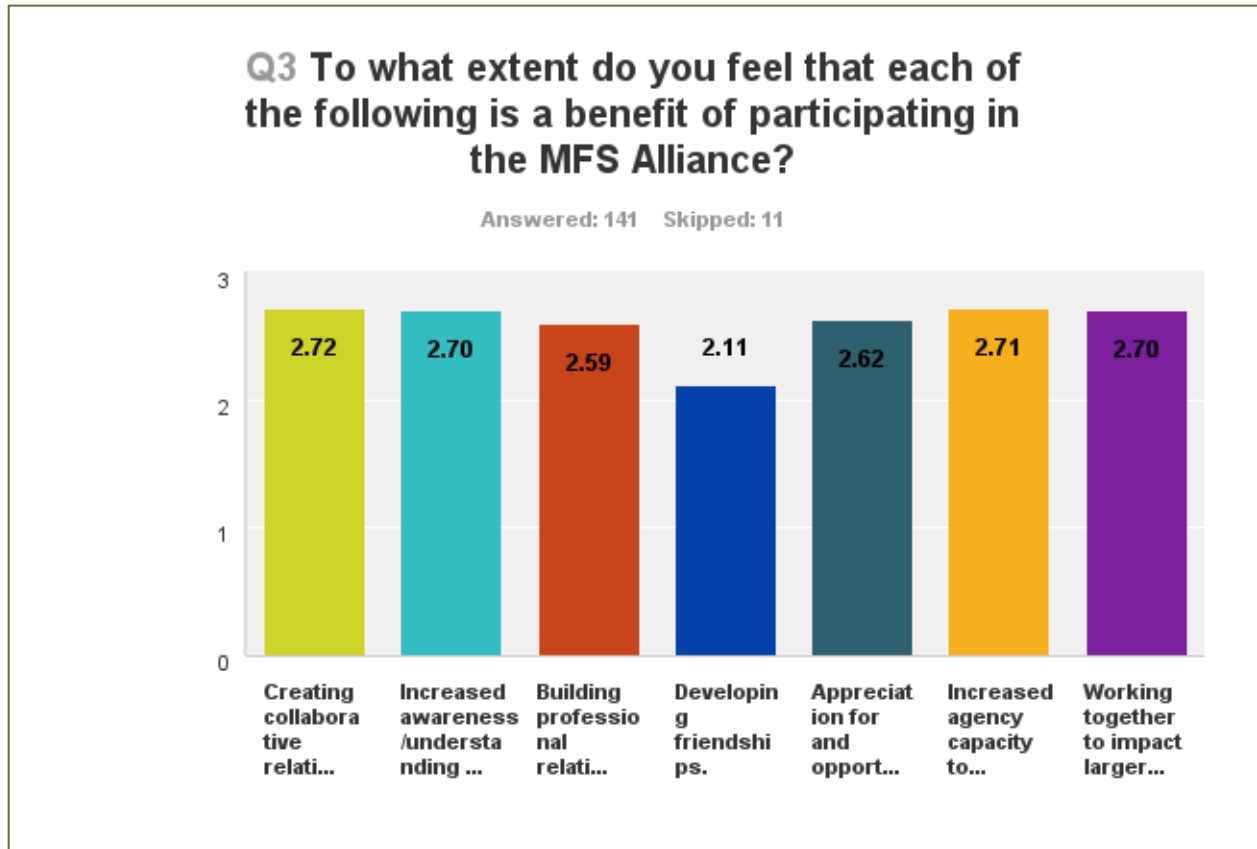
Figure 2 Average Ratings of Benefit by Attribute

Table 6 Responses to Question 3 by Six Statements

Attributes of MFSA Membership	No Benefit	Moderate Benefit	Great Benefit	Total	Average Rating
Creating collaborative relationships and strengthening relationships among member organizations.	1.42%	24.82%	73.76%		
	2	35	104	141	2.72
Increased awareness/ understanding of member organizations and who they serve.	0.71%	29.08%	70.21%		
	1	41	99	141	2.7
Building professional relationships on an individual level.	2.84%	35.46%	61.70%		
	4	50	87	141	2.59
Developing friendships.	17.02%	54.61%	28.37%		
	24	77	40	141	2.11
Appreciation for and opportunities to expand interdisciplinary partnerships.	2.84%	31.91%	65.25%		
	4	45	92	141	2.62
Increased agency capacity to provide family support through training.	2.84%	23.40%	73.76%		
	4	33	104	141	2.71
Working together to impact larger system challenges.	3.55%	23.40%	73.05%		
	5	33	103	141	2.7

Question 4.

Question 4 was an open-ended item that invited respondents to name additional benefits of MFSA participation, which were not in included in the seven attribute statements.

While, six individuals entered 'none', eight comments/additions were made to the benefits of MFSA participation. In general, the anecdotal responses are reflective and expand upon the statements assessed in Question 3 and are aligned with the MFSA mission statement. Additionally, these statements provide insight into possible ongoing needs of providers including the desire to share and compare services, and to add service providers that may be underrepresented.

1. Connection to similar efforts/alliances in other states, and the national perspective.
2. Comparing services to provide cohesion.
3. Professional development opportunities; developing the capacity, understanding, performance, of agencies and individuals; establishing standards for services and performance; creating opportunity for streamlining access and appropriate services for families due to coordination of intake, and findhelp.phx
4. Add more children's mental health providers to the mix. Mental health problems are growing in children, and especially among foster children.
5. Having the opportunity to present or share what our programs do.
6. A sense of accomplishment on a personal level for being involved and active in an alliance that moves things forward.
7. Help immigration children and families with shelter, food, work and treatment for health and mental health.
8. Creating awareness in Faith Community about all the work that is going on.

Question 5. As a result of the work of the MFS Alliance, do you feel that family support providers in Maricopa County are more effectively meeting the needs of

families?

The final question was designed to query the overall impact of MFSA on the effectiveness of family support in Maricopa County. Again 141 persons completed the question and 10 skipped it.
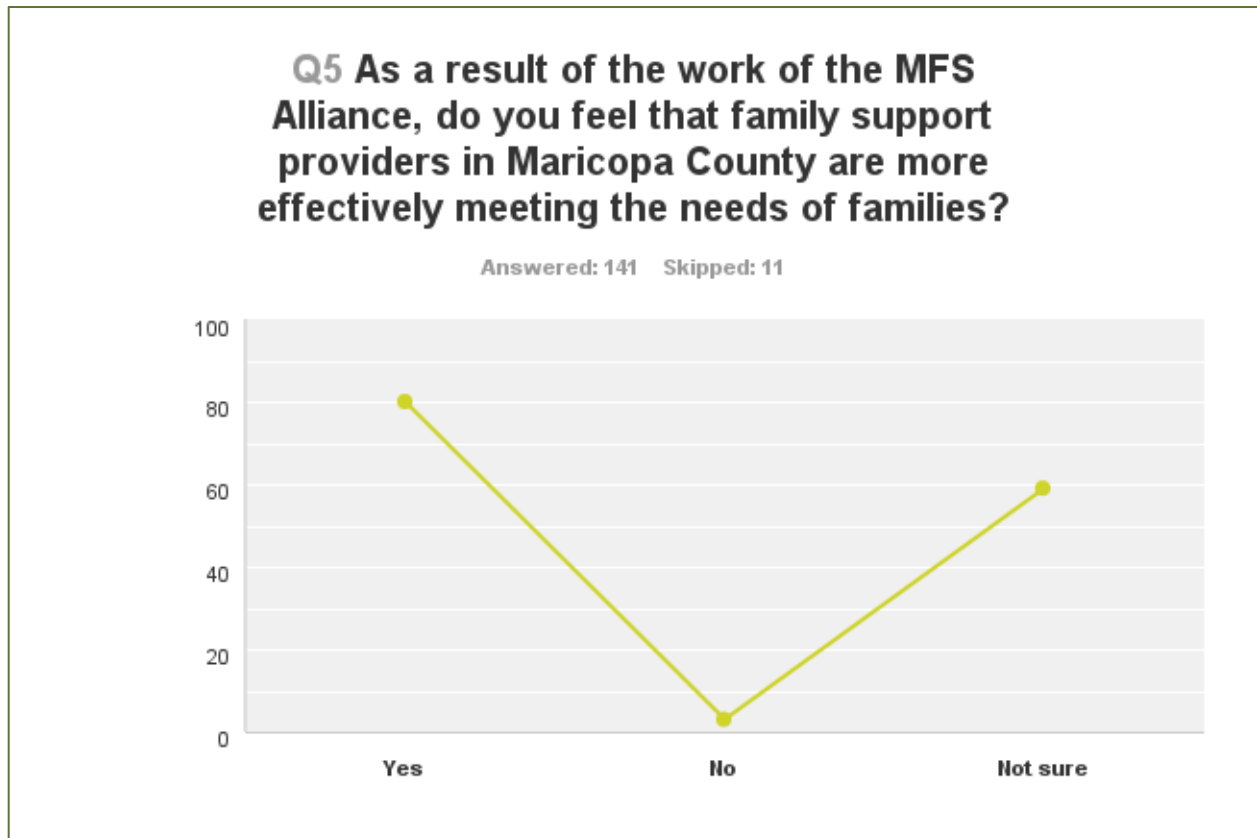
Figure 3 Contribution to Effectiveness of Service Providers

The above visual representation of the actual responses to Question 5 suggest that the majority of respondents (80 respondents) agree that MFSA is effectively meeting its mission of supporting family service providers; while, a substantial minority (59) are not sure of the effectiveness of the organization. Only three individuals indicated that MFSA is not effective. Comments by some respondents indicate that they may not have enough information or experience with the organization to rate its effectiveness.

Table 7. Benefit Contribution to Effectiveness

Contribution to Effectiveness of Service Providers	
Answer Choices	**Responses**
Yes	56.74%
	80
No	2.13%
	3
Not sure	41.84%
	59
Total Respondents	141

As 57 percent of respondents feel that the MFSA has contributed to the effectiveness of family support providers in Maricopa County and only two percent rate it as ineffective, we may infer a general appreciation of the organization. However, the additional 42 percent that report not being sure of the contribution of MFSA toward effectiveness suggests there may be a lack of understanding of the mission and implementation strategies of the organization. Initially, this 'split' in the ratings appears confusing, especially when compared Question # 3's responses indicating strong benefits' ratings of four of the six statements.

In order to better understand these responses, the committee examined Question 5's ratings by the three levels of attendance at Training Events (0-1, 2-4, >5). Training events were selected as the independent measure rather than General Membership Meetings, Subcommittee, and Steering Committee Meetings as they represent the most frequently attended type of event and the broadest range of attendees and that those with more attendance were likely to have the best understanding of the mission and activities of MFSA.

Initial review of the means of the ratings at the three levels suggests that individuals with greater attendance rated the MFSA to be more beneficial to service providers than those attending a single event. A One Way Analysis of Variance to compare these means, indicates that significant differences exist between the three levels, $p = .014$,

and Post Hoc comparisons (Tukey HSD) indicate that the statistically significant differences reside between level one (0-1 event) and level two (2-4 events), p = .033; however not with level three (>5 events). These results are congruent with the high degree of benefit reported in Question #3, *Increased Capacity to Provide Support through Training;* thus, suggesting that the MFSA is perceived to be of benefit to the effectiveness of family support providers.

Conclusion

Based on four factors, the *Outreach, Intake and Referral Subcommittee* believe that the MFSA has been beneficial to family service providers in Maricopa County:

1. A broad array of providers have joined and maintained membership as evidenced by attendance at training and planning meetings including general membership, steering and sub-committee meetings. Attendance at each type of meeting exceeded 110 persons in the first three years.
2. Strong core volunteers emerged to lead the Steering and Subcommittees; and each committee engaged committed membership to accomplish their respective goals.
3. Membership and attendance were not one-shot ventures; rather over 50 percent of participants attended multiple types of events.
4. The majority of participants attributed benefits to membership in the MFSA, which clearly reflect the organization's mission of coordinating and expanding the network of support agencies working to provide the resources and aid necessary for families in need to be successful and independent.

Recommendations

As the survey suggests, participants, especially those who attend more than one training, derive benefit from their engagement with the MFSA. In order to continue being relevant and beneficial to family service providers, identification and responsiveness to providers' needs are critical. Strategies for accomplishing this may include *systematic*

satisfaction surveys at the end of each meeting or training, convening periodic focus groups with the various types of members to determine the level of responsiveness to the content being delivered, and more formal surveys such as the one presented here on an annual basis.

Similarly, it may be beneficial, at this point in time, for MFSA to look critically at factors related to attendance and how the needs of family service providers are assessed and met, such as why member attendance at training events fell off between the fourth and fifth events; or why members are unsure if the MFSA is impacting the effectiveness or family service providers.

It is possible that the MFSA may need to do a better job of sharing its mission and vision with attendees for whom an individual training may be their first and only MFSA contact. Many organizations develop a standard 'Elevator Speech' that serves as a *commercial* to inform the community of their mission or goals. Such information may be used at each MFSA event to better inform consumers and recruit interested and appropriate new partners.

Finally, it may be of interest to all involved to find out if families perceive any differences in the level or quality of care since the inception of the MFSA.

In any event, the process undertaken by the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, partnering organizations, especially member agencies involved in the subcommittees and steering committee have provided a better understanding of who is providing services to whom, potential for future collaborations on recognized areas of need, and the commitment and growing capacity to tackle larger system-wide issues as they arise. On behalf of the Outreach, Intake and Referral Subcommittee, we thank Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust for their commitment and generous support for family service providers in Maricopa County.

Respectfully submitted,

Outreach, Intake and Referral Subcommittee