

I. Executive Summary

Those who do not have power over the story that dominates their lives, power to retell it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as time changes, truly are powerless, because they cannot think new thoughts

-Salman Rushdie

Center For Family Connections (CFFC) created Project Inclusion to establish and test best practices for promoting teens' positive identity development while supporting them in expressing and exploring their feelings. Project inclusion gives youth the power to examine their story, deconstruct it, joke about it and retell it through the creation of a personal magazine (Zine) or theatrical Production (Play with Reality) and in doing so, they develop new thoughts and a new understanding of themselves and their relationships.

Project Inclusion targeted adolescents (ages 13-18), from complex blended families—created through adoption, foster care, kinship, guardianship or by reproductive technology. These were teens dealing with loss of identity, the feeling of rejection, lack of trust and a concern about who they were, and who they would become.

Like their peers, adopted teens must renegotiate relationships with parents, siblings, peers, and other adults. There are inevitable conflicts with parents and, with more than one set of parents in their lives, it becomes a complicated identity puzzle: Who am I like? Who am I not like? Who am I? In a time of such confusion, youth can develop problematic coping skills or problematic behaviors in an attempt to manage the lack of identity resolution. Project Inclusion provided teens with a safe environment in which they could express their rage, sadness, joy, humor, and other feelings associated with their complex lives and in doing so promoted self awareness, heightened self esteem and capacity to build relationships.

Overview of the Program

At the core of Project Inclusion was a high-interest magazine/production or **Zine Project** and a theatrical/dramatic performance project, or **Play With Reality (PWR)** that promoted expression and sharing among peers. Project Inclusion used clinical interventions and group mentoring to assess, develop and enhance youth relationships and self-esteem. Adult and/or peer mentors were assigned to each Zine and PWR group. This **GROUPMentor** was an individual raised in foster care, adoption, or kinship care. The main focus was self-esteem and self-awareness building for the teen. **JAM Sessions (a version of Family Group Conferencing)** were a key element in beginning this process. They consisted of a selected group of individuals (mostly adults) that each teen had identified as significant in their lives. These important people or guests gathered for an evening of sharing their perspectives on the teens' strengths, challenges and visions for the teens' future. The teens watched this process from behind a one way mirror. The viewing from behind the mirror (with one of clinicians) vs. participation by the teens in the room with the guests was intended as a way to eliminate anxiety or discomfort on the part of the teen, thus leaving them open and more receptive to hearing and integrating what was said. Once all of the teen participants who chose to hold a JAM Session, completed it, they collectively participated in the group of their choice - Zine group or a PWR group. In these groups, teens, with the support of clinical staff and GROUPMentorZ, had the opportunity to explore feelings, experiences and

reactions to the JAM Session as well as what it is like to be touched by adoption and be a teenager using their choice of creative expression, including but not limited to drawing, collage, music, dance, drama, photography, etc.

During the three-year project period, CFFC built partnerships for model implementation, and evaluation. The project included extensive evaluation by Dr. Ellen Pinderhughes of Tufts University. These partnerships played a key role in the development, refinement, evaluation, documentation and replication of the model. Partnerships supported CFFC efforts in providing dissemination and training on Project Inclusion across the nation.

The Project Goals

Goal 1: Youth Empowerment: to develop a better sense of self and sense of self in relation to others, and to strengthen teen relationships post adoption through JAM sessions, group activities and individual work.

Goal 2: Develop program staffing, trainings and curriculum for the training of AFC Mentoring Mentors and Center For Family Connections clinical staff.

Goal 3: Evaluate all project outcomes, to disseminate all information in year three to replicate the project in one other site.

Outcomes

Outcomes were identified for the family/client level, as well as the macro/systemic level. It was hypothesized that the Project Inclusion model would increase the self-esteem among teens through the exploration of their identities via the creation of an original Zine and/or the development of an original theatrical production, as well as promote greater self-awareness among teens as they listened to the thoughts and feelings of those individuals whom they invited to their JAM Sessions. Additionally, it was hypothesized that this would foster empowerment for Teens as they gained knowledge of themselves and what makes them unique.

The outcome evaluation methods involved both quantitative and qualitative measures designed to capture Project activity on the system, dyadic and individual youth level for both PWR and the Zine Group. Where necessary, the measures were adapted to more closely fit the particular nature of this Project. All of the trainings, Family Group Conferences and Zine groups were videotaped so they could be review and studied for the purpose of ongoing collection of information.

Findings

Increased Self-Esteem and Comfort level with Self. Video ratings and narrative data indicated that Teens' level of self-esteem and comfort level with self-improved as a result of the Zine groups. From the videotapes of Zine sessions, five dimensions of self-comfort and self-esteem were rated: self-expression, exploration of the world, help seeking, self-exploration, and self-other comfort. Video ratings were examined in two ways - 1) improvement across three of five dimensions of self-comfort within each teen, and 2) improvement in each dimension across all Teens - there is evidence that the Zine groups had a positive impact. There was improvement in three of five dimensions of self-comfort/self-esteem among 80% of the Teens. Viewed another

way, 90% of Teens showed improvement in self-expression, and 70% of Teens showed improvement in exploration of the world, and in self-other comfort, respectively.

Narrative data reveal that Teens found the Zine group to be a powerful facilitator of their self-image/self-esteem. For example, one teen noted that as a result of the group, she is happier and has more energy. Prior to the group she thought she was the only adoptee with challenges, but she learned that she's not the only one and she learned to deal with those challenges in a more positive way. Another teen, after completing her Zine group voiced a new perspective about herself and others, noting, "I don't care what others think of me." Another teen found a new perspective on using her strengths to manage her challenges. Whereas before the Zine group she didn't know, after the group, she noted her persistence in trying to use her strengths in a compensatory way. Parents noticed the improvements as well, "She has been supported, affirmed, and as a result, shows signs of confidence." [There is] "more confidence - more openness about adoption issues and more expression of emotion and affection." "The Group Brought her back to her artistic expression of her feelings - seems more at peace."

"Private I" responses indicate that Teens' level of self-esteem and comfort level with self did improve as a result of their involvement in PWR. For example, one teen appreciated being able to "talk about your problems and have a group that would support you." Another Teen poignantly noted that PWR is about working on "how to find our voices." And a third teen emphasized the value of PWR in providing the opportunity "to express your thoughts to people like me". This same teen noted how hard it is for internationally adopted youth, "when they don't know how to speak the language to make new friends and adjust to a new life."

Through the group-based experiential and acting focus, PWR provides an important experience for Teens to explore themselves, find their voices and experience the support of a community who shares their history. The activities in PWR provided a different group-based opportunity from those in Zine groups and may provide an alternate vehicle to facilitate an enhanced sense of self for some teens.

Teen Empowerment From Exploration of Experience and Identity. Event summaries indicate that through Zine Groups and PWR, Teens were provided with opportunities to explore themselves and their histories. Each forum provided a variety of activities, ranging from individual exercises (e.g., construction of the Zine, individual responses to "Private I"), to dyadic exercises (e.g., Reporter interview, responses to "Private I"), to small group activities (e.g., group Zine, group role playing activities). Event summaries, video data and narrative data indicate that Teens engaged in these activities to conduct the self-exploration and sharing with others. Staff noted that in both the Zine Group and PWR teens explored themes around their experiences of adoption including thoughts about birth families, search and reunion, multicultural identity, country of origin, and siblings.

While certain activities engaged certain Teens more than others, the overall experience facilitated a greater understanding of self and others like one. A parent recognized this when she noted, "[PI] is a creative way to process feelings that is valuable, very different from therapy."

The long-term impact of PI was particularly apparent during a Zine Reunion gathering that brought together Teens from Zine Groups 1-IV. This gathering took place between three and 9 months after completion of Zine Groups. Although the predictable grouping of Teens from the same Zine Group initially occurred, Teens easily engaged in a new activity designed to facilitate connections among all Zine group Teens. The experiences of Teens in the Reunion Zine suggest

that Teens were able to retain the ability to access, explore and express themselves and their unique qualities. Common elements in the two PI components (Zine Group, PWR), a group-based opportunity to individually and collectively explore one's history and experiences through therapeutically supervised activities, appear to be important elements of change for Teens.

Increased Self Awareness in Youth. Teens who participated in either Zine groups or PWR derived a heightened awareness of their unique and shared adoption experiences. Narrative, video of Zine sessions, and Private I data point to this enhanced understanding. Teen's comments during adoption discussions reflected their developing awareness about their own history (for example, one teen realized that she knew little about her country of birth). One GROUPMentor provided a rich description: "A place to express yourself, be safe and to meet some people that are just like you that have some amazing stories to share."

These experiences also helped Teens find support for the ways that they are like other non-adopted teens, as well. For example, one Zine participant echoed the sentiments of others when she expressed the hope that the Zines will help others see "how we are as people, not just adopted."

Anecdotal comments from some Teens indicate that they did develop a greater understanding of their strengths and challenges from JAM session feedback. For example, one teen, when asked if there was anything she brought to the Zine group that people had mentioned in her JAM session, she immediately stated, "leadership," and commented how this contributed to the group functioning. During JAM sessions, many Teens' emotional responses (laughter, tears) and comments (of agreement, of acknowledgment) reflected their awareness of how others viewed them. One teen drew from the comments she heard in her JAM session to respond to her JAM participants and acknowledge some of her challenges and strengths. However, when asked after the Zine group ended to reflect on feedback from the JAM session, some Teens were unable to recall what they had heard.

Although many Teens showed awareness of the perceptions of others during JAM sessions, there was some variation in Teens' ability to recall the feedback following the Zine group completion. There are some possibilities for this variation. Some Teens may have incorporated others' perceptions into their sense of self in such a way that they could not distinguish - after the Zine group - comments made during JAM sessions. For some Teens, the JAM session feedback, while helpful, may not have been new information, and so might not have stood out in their memory. Some Teens may simply have forgotten the feedback received during the JAM session. However, despite the variation in Teens' recall of feedback received during the JAM session, their comments during JAM and subsequent Zine reflect a general positive impact of the JAM feedback on the Teens.

Teens Reveal Group Work, Thoughts and Feelings. The Project provided teens with a venue to share thoughts and feelings with parents and the community in a manner that allowed Teens the control to decide what to reveal or keep private about themselves. Great care was taken by staff to foster an environment that provided the necessary safety and containment for teens to share their thoughts and feelings. To this end every group developed a list of rules/guiding principals. Additionally, clinical activities and interventions were developed to help foster group cohesiveness. The model allowed Teens in the Zine Group the choice of whether or not show off their Zines in a Zine Exhibit as well as the opportunity to verbally share as little or as much as they wanted to about their Zines and experience in the Project. In PWR Teens developed a story that was reflective of their own stories to the extent that they felt comfortable. The cast was

allowed to choose whether or not to hold a question and answer session at the end of the performance in which they could answer in character or as themselves.

Parents and other important people in Teens' lives attended the culminating events for the Zine group and PWR. After the completion of each forum, these individuals were given the opportunity (verbally or in writing) to express their thoughts about the Teens' experiences. Some parents acknowledged realizing - at a new and different level - the issues that their transracially adopted Teens have faced. Other parents noted the value of the Zine group or PWR for their child: "I mostly loved that she had the chance to meet other teens with histories of adoption and to hear from others whose situations she might not see as even more different than her own!" "The issue of adoption runs deep with my daughter, and surely with the others."

Teens revealed themselves, their work, thoughts and feelings through artistic expression fostered by Project Inclusion. Parents and community members felt the impact of Teens expressions through the expressive medium of Zines and/or a theatrical performance. Through the opportunity to see and hear about the experiences that Teens had with Zine groups and PWR, parents' understanding of their children's issues were enhanced. A few parents mentioned seeing changes in their children at home. However, since Teens vary in the degree to which they share about their experiences with their parents, and parents vary in their observational skills with their teens, this may not be the case for all families. Parent participation in JAM sessions, Zine Exhibit sessions and PWR performances are likely an important vehicle to promote increased understanding. Below are some impressions parents and community members shared in response to Zine and the PWR performance:

- *"I thought they were a valuable keepsake for the participants of a supportive experience"*
- *"Impressed by the variety of themes and the creativity of participants."*
- *"I feel like I got to know a lot of the kids personally before I met them."*
- *"Thought it was a good idea to have time for these kids to put some of their deeper thoughts on paper."*
- *"I liked the artwork and the willingness to stand in front of everyone and share about their Zine."*
- *"It was great to see individual Zines. Photos and letters added a lot."*
- *"All different, just like the teens - very interesting...amazing depth."*
- *"All creative, all unique... self-expression is very powerful."*
- *"These were quite impressive. I feel I got to know the kids a bit through them"*
- *"They are so creative and artistic! I was impressed by how each person expressed themselves and addressed their own issues."*

GROUPMentorZ act as Supportive and Encouraging Role Models. Narrative data from GROUPMentorZ suggests that supervision served several purposes. First, GROUPMentorZ found supervision to be quite helpful in providing feedback and direction for their roles with the Teens. As Zine groups would start, Mentors sometimes found that they were unclear about how much of their role was helping the Teens with their Zine and how much was doing their own Zine. Supervision meetings served to clarify this for GROUPMentorZ. One mentor noted, “I thought in the beginning it was more of a technical mentor program, but this is a better way to do it.” Second, supervision served to help GROUPMentorZ explore their own experiences. Another mentor noted this additional benefit of supervision: “supervision definitely made me more aware of my experiences and learn more about myself.” Third, supervision served to facilitate relationships among GROUPMentorZ, as well, “We got closer in supervision... even though our strengths are really different.”

GROUPMentorZ supervision enabled GROUPMentorZ to meet their individual needs for self-exploration as adopted persons so that they could be ready to help facilitate the process among the Teens in the Zine sessions. The group nature of the supervision provided an opportunity for additional bonding among Mentors.

Project Inclusion Model is Revised. Evaluative instruments completed by Teens and/or GROUPMentorZ provided feedback to staff that informed the development and revisions of the Project Inclusion model including both Zine and PWR groups. Some suggestions included eliminating the use of the Journal, fostering more communication between group participants, restructuring the time of the group and keeping particularly well-liked activities. Staff made changes to the model to integrate these suggestions and found that a core group of activities helped to foster the most communication and restructuring time helped to increase the total number of participants and allowed for individual time preparing and supporting volunteers prior to and following group sessions.

The curriculum and structure of Project Inclusion was shaped during the running of Zine Groups I through III. At its' inception a single cycle of the Zine Group consisted of Information Session, Kick-Off Group, Intake meeting/Pre-Family Group Conference (FGC) (later re-named JAM Sessions), three Zine Making Sessions, a Reunion Group (later re-named a Zine Exhibit and Backstage Party) and a Check out Session. Twenty-two clinical activities were developed for use in either the information Session, Zine Making Sessions or Backstage Party. These activities were aimed at establishing a safe environment, building relationships, and supporting Teens around adoption specific discussion and exploration.

Zine Group IV was a turning point in the Project where efforts began to shift from developing a solid clinically effective group model to altering the model in preparation for replication and continued use without government funding. To this end Zine Group IV saw the elimination of the Kick-Off Group. It was initially believed that a Kick-Off Session was need to give participants a sense of the Group before they fully committed as well as provide them with an opportunity to share questions, fears, and hopes for upcoming JAM Sessions. However, we found that on average 1 person voluntarily departed from any given Group whether there was a Kick-Off Session offered or not. Additionally, Zine Group IV saw a shift from intakes completed in person to complete over the phone. In Zine Group VI the need for phone intakes solidified as the Information Session aspect of the Project was removed from the Group cycle. Phone intakes became an especially important tool in screening clients and Pre-JAM Session were also now perceived of as an intake meeting. Any information disseminated to participants and their guardians at the time of the Information Session was now provided to them during the Phone

Intake and or at the Pre-JAM Session and then reviewed again at the first Zine Making Session. CFFC recognized that holding Information Sessions could prove useful in obtaining parent and Teen “buy in” to the Project. However, removal of the Information Session helped make the Zine Group more marketable and fiscally feasible.

Challenges and Lessons

Recruitment. Implementation of this project has been thoughtful, thorough, and responsive to ongoing and new challenges. One challenge was with the successful recruitment of a sizeable group. A total of 24 participants engaged in and completed a Zine Group. The average number of teens in a given Zine Making Session was 3.3. Another challenge was that of successful recruitment and retention of males to participate in the Project. Nine males were recruited and of that 6 went on to participate and complete a Zine Group. A total of 14 participants were involved in PWR. Of these, 5 were males.

For Teens who had no prior relationship with CFFC, their families needed reassurance in order to feel confident in entrusting their Teens to commit to a Project aimed at giving voice to their adoption stories. Answering parents’ questions, including the unasked questions and general hesitations, was an important aspect of recruitment and retention. Additionally, it was necessary to get Teens to ‘buy in’ of their own volition. Thus, engaging and eventually recruiting the Teens resulted in many more meetings and individual communication, prior to their committing to the project.

Difficulties encountered with organizing invitees to attend one single JAM Session revealed positive outcomes that had not been anticipated. Because a number of invitees were not able to attend the JAM Session on its scheduled date, staff clinicians requested that they participate through a written letter about the teens’ strengths, challenges, and their hopes for the teens’ future. These letters became a significant component of the conferences as an additional mode for the Teens to acquire information about themselves and came to be called Family Group Contributions (FGC). The Teens enjoyed hearing letters written to them and about them and became involved in this process by selecting specific JAM Session participants to read the letters. Some Teens went on to integrate these letters into their Zines.

Evaluation. After measures were used during the first two Zine groups, Project staff and evaluators discussed challenges and solutions. A key challenge was the time-intensive nature of reading the questionnaire and reporting, especially for children with learning disabilities. Two strategies were employed to address this challenge. First, measurement points were reduced to two: before the first Zine session and after the last Zine session. Participants in Play with Reality completed measures twice: before the first PWR session and after the last PWR session. Second, when indicated, Project staff read measures to/with youth in order to minimize fatigue in reading and facilitate response.

Rating of videotapes of Zine sessions and Play with Reality sessions proved to be more labor intensive and time consuming than initially projected. Video ratings through the fourth Zine session and first Play with Reality session were completed. While the videotapes of all Zine Making Sessions and JAM Sessions were useful for evaluation purposes they also allowed for efficient use as staff training tapes. The tapes have been used for training of CFFC staff and GROUPMentorZ. They have also been helpful to use as supervision tools in considering the clinical needs of the Teens, parents, and GROUPMentorZ.

GROUPMentorZ. GROUPMentorZ participated in and benefited from the Project in a manner that is very similar to the Teens. GROUPMentorZ often find that the Zine Group is their first opportunity to reflect upon and consider issues of adoption and identity in their own lives. GROUPMentorZ may find that personal reactions arise through the process of becoming a GROUPMentor. GROUPMentorZ may uncover personal challenges or experience powerful reactions that they were not previously aware of and have not yet processed.

Because of GROUPMentorZ potential personal reactions to themes discussed in the Zine Making and PWR Groups, it was essential for the GROUPMentorZ to have well defined, consistent, and ongoing supervision and support. GROUPMentorZ were asked to arrive to the group thirty minutes before the Teens arrived to assist with set-up. This allowed the GROUPMentorZ time to check in with and obtain support from each other as well as staff. It was an opportunity to be informed of the planned group activity for the day and prepare for it. Additionally, GROUPMentorZ were asked to create their own Zones and contribute to the Group Zine rather than solely helping the Teens with their individual Zones. With their own personal creative outlet, GROUPMentorZ were able to individually address (with staff - independent from the group) the issues that arose for (during check in/out) them and served as models for using these reactions to produce their Zine.

Replication. The Zine group replicated at LMACS involved the recruitment of individuals with multi-systemic stressors (primary support, economic, academic, substance abuse and legal problems). This population proved challenging to engage despite the anticipation that recruiting from a self-contained, already-established group (within the school) would make it easier to achieve a sizable number of Zine Group participants.

Due to time constraints in the Replication Group the Information Session was combined with the initial Zine Making Session, which proved efficient and practical for the replication group as well as subsequent Zine Groups. Rolling important information and activities from the Information Session into the initial Zine Making Session was an effective step for making Project Inclusion more cost-effective and efficient.

Over the course of the Project, CFFC was presented with the demand for Project Inclusion to be made available for younger children. As a result of parental requests, CFFC developed a version of Project Inclusion for pre-teens, called Tween Zine. The psychoeducational curricula were augmented slightly to meet the needs of younger children and this group was piloted with success under CFFC Pre and Post Adoption Consultation Team (CFFC Out Patient Department) in the Spring of 2005. At this writing, two successful Tween Zine groups have been held.

Summary

CFFC intends to continue to work for enduring macro level changes in regard to how youth identity development and relationship building fostered and maintained within the adoption and social service professions. Dr. Pavao will continue to advocate for policy change that recognizes the importance of sibling relationships for children who are being raised separate from their siblings.

Dr. Pavao and CFFC staff will continue to offer trainings about the Project Inclusion Program. In Fact, a Project Inclusion training for parents and professionals is scheduled to occur on February 22, 2006 in Cambridge, MA.

CFFC also plans to distribute the four manuals developed during the grant period. These manuals are intended to assist other agencies with providing groups that support positive teen identity development and relationship building to adoptive families within their community. CFFC is passionate about our belief that youth who are provided with a structured therapeutic environment are better able to develop self-esteem and build and maintain relationships.

II. Introduction and Overview

1. The Adoption Community

Adoptions in the United States have grown in number and diversity, but the vast majority of adoption resources focus on placement, and on preparation of adoptive families before placement. Few resources exist to help adoptive families, foster families, birth family, extended families, and adult adopted or fostered people to cope with the challenges they face *after* adoption placement. Through individual and family therapy and participation in groups, CFFC offers children a safe space where they can talk about their feelings and experiences with individuals who normalize these feelings, and encourage them to see the strengths and value in their unique stories.

Research states that adopted and foster children are at greater risk for significant problems in adolescence. This is because the normative developmental tasks of adolescence—such as exploring identity and self-esteem—are magnified and complicated for these youth. Children who are adopted or living in foster care often feel different from their peers and alone in their experience. CFFC’s groups and projects connect youth with their peers, and group mentors who share similar experiences, and instill in them a sense of belonging, connection, and increased self-esteem.

2. Center For Family Connections

Project Inclusion is a program of Center For Family Connections (CFFC). At the heart of CFFC’s work is the conviction to understand the needs of the children involved in complex family situations and *to put these needs above all else*. CFFC works with deep commitment and passion to assure that this happens and to motivate other professionals and advocates to act with the same principles. CFFC believes that adoption is about *finding families for children, not about finding children for families*.

CFFC offers internationally recognized services for children and families. CFFC’s services are child-centered, non-pathologizing, systemic, and strength-based. CFFC’s experienced clinicians know the ins and outs of complex families and can provide the skills, tools, and talent to help build stronger and healthier families.

CFFC was the first -and is still is one of the only- agencies to provide pre and post adoption (including foster care, kinship, guardianship, reproductive technologies, and other complex families) clinical work, consulting, and training for parents and professionals without the conflicting demands of placing children as well.

CFFC, with its thirty-year history of innovation on behalf of families of all kinds, is both a resource and a model for all who work to support the healthiest of relationships between children and families. Guided by Founder and CEO, Dr. Joyce Maguire Pavao, CFFC utilizes Dr. Pavao’s trend-setting models based on her “Normative Crises in the Development of the Adoptive Family” and a strengths-based, developmental and systems perspective.

CFFC provides many essential services under its Pre/Post Adoption Consulting Team (PACT) (established in 1982), including consultation to individuals, families, therapists, schools, lawyers, judges, and educators, and ongoing therapy for individuals, couples, and families who live in the world of adoption and complex blended families. CFFC also offers long-term, short-term, and day-long groups. PACT provides clinically supervised visits for families and children. The model is designed to structure interactions so that the ties that bind children to birth families, foster families, or other significant people, are managed in the best interests of the child and to provide real relationships that are clear in role and responsibility. These clinically supervised visits are therapeutic interventions that build connections and understanding.

CFFC has worked with support from two federal grants under the Adoption Opportunities and the Children's Bureau in DHHS and from corporate and family foundations. CFFC has held a contract with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) for permanency planning and training for over 20 years. Children who have trauma need a sense of security, safety, and permanence. Through consultations, CFFC assists DSS in achieving these goals. CFFC stresses collaborative planning that includes all professionals and the unique knowledge they each can bring to serve the best interests of children and families.

CFFC stresses prevention, preservation and, if needed, restoration of family stability and mental health for all segments, all phases, and all challenges of the adoption experience. Services at CFFC take an 'asset-based,' preventive approach and work to build on family strengths in order to best meet the needs of children. Families themselves hold the key to their children's healthy development, so CFFC aims to empower families, giving them the tools to solve their own problems and engaging them in helping other families.▫ At the same time, CFFC provides services and training to make trained, supported professionals and mentors available to help families navigate the challenges and crises that many complex families face.▫ CFFC not only provides direct support and education to families, but also aims to permanently enhance and alter the capacity of child welfare institutions, schools, and communities to foster healthy families. CFFC's national and international trainings inform individuals across the world of the importance of addressing the needs of this unique population of children and families and provides them with the means to serve them most effectively.

CFFC is located in Cambridge Massachusetts, a city in the Greater Boston area. As of the 2000 census there were 101,355 people, 42,615 households, and 17,599 families residing in the city. Cambridge is easily accessible by convenient public transportation. Individuals can travel by subway, or one of the several bus routes. Cambridge is a very diverse city. It is home to a variety of people including Harvard and MIT professors and immigrants from Latin America and countries from many other regions. The local private high school has 67 flags hanging in the cafeteria to demonstrate the many countries represented in this community. CFFC is at a crossroads that connects it to many highways and expressways that link it to Greater Boston and to the North, and South Shores and the Western Suburbs.

3. Target Population

CFFC targeted teens (during the Project teens were referred to as TeenZ) ranging in age from 13 to 18 years old and their families formed through adoption, foster care, and or kinship care in the Greater Boston Area. Project Inclusion is an empowerment program aimed at increasing self-esteem by strengthening identity and relationships in youth who have been raised in adoption,

foster care, or kinship care. This aim is reached through two different media, the Zine Group and Play With Reality Theater Group (PWR). The Zine Group and PWR facilitate teens' self-exploration with support from group mentors (GROUPMentorZ & JuniorMentZ) within the context of expressive therapy groups. In the Zine Group, participants attended Zine Making Sessions in which teens and GROUPMentorZ created a magazine (Zine) that captured who they are. In the PWR participants attended Theater Skills Training Sessions in which teens and GROUPMentorZ created and executed a theatrical performance that spoke to their collective experience of adoption. During both the Zine Group and Play With Reality, teens reflected on others' perspectives as they further defined their identities. While the Project was open to all teens fitting the target demographic, regardless of skill, experience or interest in the arts, the nature of the Project seemed to attract teens with previous experience with or a profound attraction to the arts.

Family and other people significant to the teen (teachers, friends, coaches, etc.) engaged in the Project by teen invitation only as a participant of the JAM Session (version of Family Group Conferencing) and/or the Zine Exhibit or Play performance

4. Problem Statement

There are few resources to help adoptive families cope with the many challenges that they face, and almost none for birth families. To preserve adoptions and prevent disruptions, CFFC has-from its inception- devoted itself to developing and testing appropriate services and integrating them into the family service system. CFFC has responded to a myriad of crises affecting adopted youth and their families. Youth of complex blended families deal with loss of identity, feelings of rejection, lack of trust, and constant concerns about who they are and who they will become.

CFFC developed Project Inclusion to establish and test best practices that provide safe environments for adolescents to identify, express, and explore their identity. Project Inclusion helps teens to understand the rage, sadness, joy, humor, and other feelings associated with their complex lives and to express those feelings to other individuals. Project Inclusion employs artistic media to promote self-empowerment, self-expression, relationship building, and identity development, leading participants through personal magazine-making (in a Zine group), or the production of a play (in Play With Reality), inspired by participants' personal stories. This project includes the elements of family group conferencing (FGC) and group mentoring by young adults who have lived in foster care or adoption.

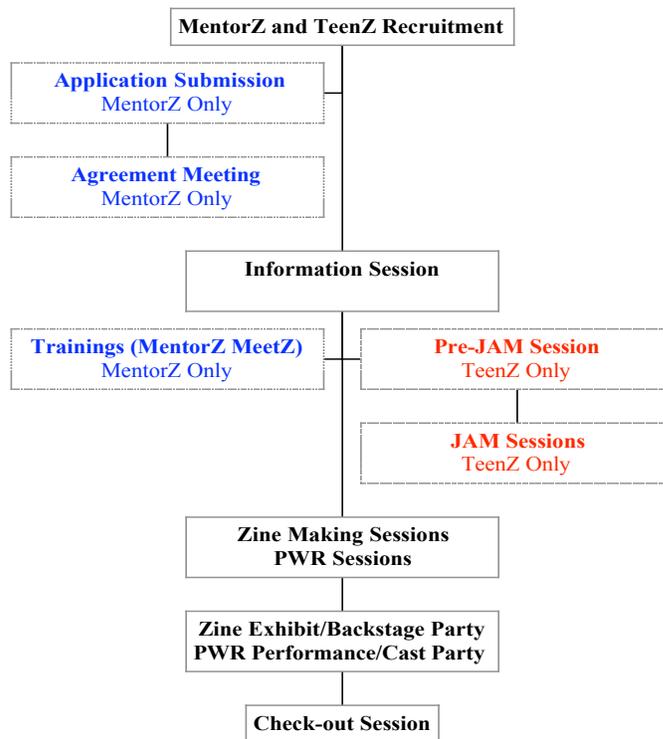
5. Overview of Program Model (see appendix for logic model)

A. The Project Goals.

- Goal 1: Youth Empowerment: to develop a better sense of self, and sense of self-in-relation-to-others, and to strengthen teen relationships, pre and post adoption, through JAM sessions, group activities and individual work.
- Goal 2: To develop program staffing, training, and curricula for the training of AFC Mentoring Mentors and Center For Family Connections clinical staff.
- Goal 3: To evaluate all project outcomes, to disseminate all information in year three, and to replicate the project in one other site.

- B. Objectives/Interventions. In order to accomplish these goals, Project Inclusion proposed and followed through with the implementation of the following objectives and interventions:
- a. the hiring of Project staff,
 - b. training and orienting staff to the Project goals and interventions,
 - c. developing a psycho-educational curricula for use with participating teens and parents,
 - d. establishing a referral network including Mass. Dept. of Social Services and private agencies so that adolescents (age-13-18) raised in adoption, foster care or kinship care could be recruited, and, the
 - e. recruiting of GROUPMentorZ (young and older adults who have grown up in complex family arrangements) to participate in Zine groups and Play With Reality,
 - f. training GROUPMentorZ as well as the larger adoption community, including adoption professionals from public and private agencies
 - g. increasing the understanding and knowledge of adoption professionals, parents and GROUPMentorZ regarding the issues faced by adolescents raised in complex families. (See figure 1 for a chart outlining clinical interventions.)

Figure 1



C. Outcomes. At the onset of the project CFFC projected immediate, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. Outcomes were identified for the family/client level, as well as the macro system level. These activities allowed for the creation of a clinical model that promotes self-awareness and self-esteem, while enabling adolescents to develop relationships with other teens who share similar backgrounds. It was hypothesized that the Project Inclusion model would increase self-esteem among teens through the exploration of their identities via the creation of an original Zine and or the development of an original theatrical production (see appendix for PWR II DVD) as well as promote greater self-awareness among teens from listening to the thoughts and feelings of those individuals whom they have invited to their JAM Session.

Project Inclusion aimed to support adolescents being raised in adoption, foster care, kinship care, and guardianship as they explore their experiences, and how those experiences have influenced who they are. CFFC hypothesized that this would foster empowerment for teens as they gained knowledge of themselves and what makes them unique.

Within the construct of the model, support and supervision provided to GROUPMentorZ allowed them to act as supportive and encouraging role models for the teens. Feedback from GROUPMentorZ and the evaluators contributed to the ongoing revision of the Project model and the development of the replication model.

The replication site, Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School (LMACS) was provided with training as well as ongoing technical assistance around conducting a Zine Group at their facility. Written manuals describing the clinical model and implementation of the Project geared for clinicians, parents, teens and GROUPMentorZ have been provided to all participants including those at the replication site.

To this end CFFC proposed to disseminate knowledge gained from implementing Project Inclusion and to expand the capacity for other agencies to establish and maintain services for adolescents in adoption, foster care, kinship or guardianship families.

D. Collaborative Partners in Recruitment and Training.

The Department of Social Services as well as other local adoption, foster care, child welfare, mental health, and mentoring agencies collaborated with CFFC to “get the word out” about Project Inclusion at the onset of the Project, as well as at the start of each new Zine Group and/or Play with Reality Session.

At the beginning of the Project in 2002, CFFC formed a collaborative partnership with Adoption and Foster Care Mentoring (AFCMentoring) for the purpose of recruiting and training GROUPMentorZ.

At the time of this collaboration, AFCMentoring, like Project Inclusion, was only in its beginning stages as an organization and still experiencing growing pains. This resulted in frequent communication and re-examination of roles, goals, and issues. Every effort was made to engage in periodic re-examination of the role that AFCMentoring was to play in the Project. CFFC monitored its own as well as AFCMentoring’s adherence to the goals of the Project. Eventually AFCMentoring’s Board of Directors decided that they would continue to provide group-mentoring services to individuals solely between the ages of five

and twelve. This age range was not inclusive of the thirteen to eighteen year olds that this demonstration Project was targeting. Subsequently, CFFC discontinued the formal partnership with AFC, but maintained contact with them for consultation around issues related to group mentoring as needed and continued to provide them with pro bono training in pre and post adoption services.

Throughout the Project, the mentoring aspect of Project Inclusion was re-assessed and AFCMentoring was consulted for assistance in developing the GROUPEntorZ component of the Project. Through discussion with AFCMentoring, the role of group mentor, rather than individual mentors began to take shape. This shift was informed by AFCMentoring's suggestion that it would be beneficial to have a highly structured and time-formatted Group Mentoring component to the Zine sessions rather than individual assignment of mentoring within the group. Subsequently, the preferred way to categorize the role of the mentors was that of GROUPEntorZ, with no individual 'matching' between GROUPEntorZ and teens.

The following have also collaborated to refer clients to Project inclusion and have been available to provide services to clients when their needs were out of the scope of Project Inclusion and CFFC: Cambridge Family and Children's Service, Children's Hospital, Cambridge health Alliance, Colleges, Schools, Places of Worship, Mental Health Service Program for Youth (MHSPY).

E. Collaborative Partners in Facilitation, Evaluation and Replication.

Gerry Speca, drama professor (best known for being the high school drama teacher of Ben Affleck, who was honorary chair of this program, and Matt Damon), provided consultation to staff around theater skills and also facilitated theater skills training sessions with the teens in Play With Reality. Gerry worked closely with staff to integrate theatrical philosophies and teachings into the therapeutic milieu that it was necessary to foster in order for the teens to feel safe enough to explore their stories of identity and adoption. Additionally, Gerry directed the final Play With Reality Performance for both PWR I and II.

Pam Coffman, a videographer, as well as Bonny and Chuck Buckley provided video editing of the Zine group in the early stages of Project Inclusion, after which this task was completed in house.

Project Inclusion was evaluated by Dr. Ellen Pinderhughes of Tufts University (Dr. Pinderhughes was at Vanderbilt the first year and then took a tenured position at Tufts University) and her team, along with CFFC's in-house evaluation and research coordinator. The evaluation team and Project staff developed a collaborative, mutual relationship that facilitated the initiation of evaluation efforts of this complex, innovative program. Project staff had a stake in ensuring that the evaluation meet their needs so that the manualizing and replication pieces of the Project ran as smoothly as possible.

CFFC collaborated with the Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School (LMACS) where the Project was replicated. When Project workbooks and manuals are published and available, the Project will be marketed for further replication across the country.

Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA) worked closely with CFFC to provide services for children and families beyond the scope of what is offered by CFFC. Children seen at CFFC in need

hospitalization are typically referred to CHA's child assessment unit. CFFC has an excellent working relationship with the CHA department of psychiatry. Dr. Pavao holds an appointment at Harvard Medical School as a Lecturer in Psychiatry through this department.

Children's Hospital's Dr. Lisa Albers, director of the adoption medical program, was trained in adoption theory by CFFC. She has gathered a staff of professionals who have also been trained by CFFC. Children's Hospital has been a referral source for youth in need of medical and psychological testing.

6. Overview of the Evaluation

A. Evaluation Design/Methodology, Data Collection Procedures and the Data Analysis Plan.

The outcome evaluation methods involved both quantitative and qualitative measures designed to capture Project activity on the systemic, dyadic and individual youth level for both PWR and the Zine Groups. The design of the evaluation followed closely the detailed work plan designed by the project staff. The first task of the evaluators was to choose appropriate methods to measure key elements of the Project as outlined in the work plan. All of the trainings, Family Group Conferences and 'Zine groups were videotaped so they would be available for review and study for the purpose of ongoing collection of information.

The choice and development of evaluation tools (see appendix) for assessing outcomes has been a collaborative process between Project staff and evaluators. The clinical staff educated evaluators about the intervention process and complexities so that appropriate methods could be chosen to evaluate the key elements of the project. After staff described the intervention, staff and evaluators jointly discussed what aspects of functioning should be evaluated. Next, the evaluators identified and recommended specific tools to assess changes in teens' perception of their competencies, their relationships with others and the quality of their lives. These tools were then reviewed by staff and adopted for use in the Project. Where necessary, the measures were adapted to more closely fit the particular nature of this Project. These measures included:

- What I am Like, a measure of self-perception. Two subscales containing a total of 12 items used to assess youths' overall self worth and perceived physical appearance. Initially, youth completed this measure before the Family Group Contribution, at the start of the first Zine making session, and after the last Zine session.
- Control, Contingency and Competence probes, a measure of perceived control. One subscale (contingency) containing 4 items used to assess youths' perceived ability to have control over their experiences. Initially, youth completed this measure before the Family Group Contribution, at the start of the first Zine Making session, and after the last Zine Making session.
- Inventory of Peer Attachment, a measure of one's trust of, communication with and alienation from one's peers, which will be used by youth participating in the Zine project to report on their relationships with other youth Zine participants. Initially, youth completed this measure, which contains 25 items, after the Kick-off

session involving teens and GROUPMentorZ, after the first Zine session and after the last Zine session.

- Network of Relationships Inventory, which assesses quality of relationships between youth and important adults in their lives. Two subscales containing a total of 13 items assessing positive qualities and negative qualities of relationships were chosen for use. Initially, youth and important adults separately completed this measure before the Family Group Planning meeting and after the Zine sessions had terminated. Youth also completed this measure at the start of the first Zine session.
- Comprehensive Quality of Life measure, which assesses youths' satisfaction with their activities and life experiences. Three subscales of this measure totaling 29 items were chosen that assess what activities youth participate in, what aspects of functioning are important to them and their overall satisfaction with these aspects of functioning. Youth completed the measure before the first Zine Making session and after the final Zine Making session had been completed.

Two measures were developed specifically to assess participants' satisfaction with the Zine project:

- Client Satisfaction Inventory, administered to teens and GROUPMentorZ. This 18 - item questionnaire is completed after the Reunion Group session, convened several weeks after the last Zine session.
- Teen and Mentor Narrative Interviews, administered over the phone with teens and GROUPMentorZ. This open-ended interview is designed to gather teens' perspective on the purpose of the Zine group, as well as its strengths and areas of weakness.

a. Quantitative Methods.

- Quantitative data included the questionnaires developed for the Zine groups. Quantitative data include questionnaires assessing teens' perceived competencies, perceived control, life satisfaction, peer relations and relationships with important others. Instruments were administered at various points (by the CFCC Research Coordinator) during the Zine intervention, and then scored and entered into SPSS by the CFCC Research Coordinator.
- An SPSS database for tracking and analyzing demographic and quantitative data was created during this evaluation period. The structure of the database is nested, featuring 3 levels of participants. The Zine group is the first level (AA); the second level denotes teens and GROUPMentorZ participating in the Zine group (BB), and the third level denotes participants in the family group conference (CC). For example, the first Zine group has been assigned 01; the teens participating in the first Zine group have been assigned 0101-0103, and the mentors working with the first Zine group were assigned 0111-0112. Participants in the Family Group Conference/Contribution were assigned numbers linked to the individual teen participants. For example, the parents of the first teen assigned to the first Zine group were assigned 010101, and 010102, respectively. This system provided flexibility when querying the data, enabling examination of data by Zine group,

individual participants and their respective family group contributors. To date, demographic data from the first Zine group has been entered into the database.

b. Qualitative Methods.

- Given the rich nature of the Zine group sessions, observational analyses were added to the ongoing quantitative instruments used since the onset of the Project. These detailed observational analyses of videotaped Zine Group sessions have allowed evaluators to more thoroughly examine the impact of the Zine Group on teen empowerment, self-esteem, and relationship-development. More specifically, ratings of teens' comfort level with self, the world and others (dimensions included: self-expression, exploring world, help-seeking, self-exploration, self-other comfort), as well as comfort level with adoption (dimensions: exploration of adoption themes, participation in discussions of adoption themes, valence of reflections about self as an adoptee) were rated. Using the developed rating system to continually monitor the teens at each point of the Project has been incredibly valuable in operationalizing and assessing their change in well-being. While labor-intensive, this qualitative methodology yields both quantitative measures of comfort level with self and comfort level with adoption, and a qualitative analysis of adoption-related themes.
- Qualitative measures included teen interview Narratives (assessing teens' perspectives of their qualities) after the Pre-JAM meeting, before the first Zine session, and after the Zine Exhibit Party. Themes about comfort level with self and comfort level with adoption were noted during each Zine session. The evaluation included observational ratings of teens' comfort with self and comfort with adoption, which were gathered during each Zine session. More specifically, these observational ratings were made on each 30-minute segment of the Zine sessions. Then, ratings were averaged across segments within each Zine session, for a summary rating score per Zine session.
- For PWR, qualitative measures included "Private I," an opportunity for teens to give a videotaped response to questions about their experience in each PWR session as adopted individuals and the impact of the session on them. teens participated in "Private I" individually or as part of a dyad/small group.
- Qualitative methods included detailed event summaries written by Project staff and videos of each Jam Session and Zine session as well as client satisfaction surveys and interviews.

Implementation measures included Event Summaries (written documentation of the activities and processes for each component), individual feedback interviews from teens and GROUPMentorZ (conducted after the Reunion session), JAM participant feedback (conducted after or at the Exhibit session) and Contact Logs (documenting time invested in recruitment and communication with participants for each component activity). Event Summaries and Contact Logs were reported by the Project Manager and participants were interviewed by the CFFC Research Coordinator. After CFFC staff gathered implementation data, they were sent to the evaluator for analysis. Consistent themes across participants or Zine components, or noteworthy themes expressed by a single participant or found in specific Zine components were identified.

All qualitative and quantitative data were sent to the evaluator for analysis. Data from these different sources serve as the foundation for the comments regarding outcomes.

- c. Problems Encountered with the Implementation of the Evaluation Plan. Implementation of this project has been thoughtful, thorough, and responsive to ongoing and new challenges. One challenge that had been noted was with the successful recruitment of a sizeable group. A total of 24 participants engaged in and completed a Zine Group. The average number of teens in a given Zine Making Session was 3.3. Another challenge was that of successful recruitment and retention of males to participate in the Project. Nine males were recruited and of that 6 went on to participate and complete a Zine Group. A total of 14 participants were involved in PWR. Of these, 5 were males.

After measures were used during the first two Zine groups, Project staff and evaluators discussed challenges and solutions. A key challenge was the time-intensive nature of reading the questionnaire and reporting, especially for children with learning disabilities. Two strategies were employed to address this challenge. First, measurement points were reduced to two: before the first Zine session and after the last Zine session. Participants in Play with Reality completed measures twice: before the first PWR session and after the last PWR session. Second, when indicated, Project staff read measures to/with youth in order to minimize fatigue in reading and facilitate response.

Rating of videotapes of Zine sessions and Play with Reality sessions proved to be more labor-intensive and time-consuming than initially projected. Video ratings through the fourth Zine session and first Play with Reality session have been completed as of this report.

III. Project Implementation Objectives and Activities

1. Intervention/Activity No.1: Hire, train, and orient project staff in program objectives, their roles, and team functioning.

One of the initial priorities of Project Inclusion was creating a team to work within the Program. Each member of the team was identified, recruited and hired to participate in the Program (see Appendix Grant Organizational Chart). All the members of the clinical team were required to have expertise and competency in working with professionals and adoptive families to create and maintain healthy connections. Clinicians working within the Program were required to have at least a master's level degree and knowledge of group and systems-based theory as well as adolescent development.

Once the team was established, the Program management team created and implemented training sessions for all participating CFFC clinicians. These sessions educated the clinicians about the administration, communication and overall infrastructure of the grant. The training also reviewed the clinical model, the goals and the objectives of the Project Inclusion Program. These trainings were videotaped for future use.

Throughout the Program, staff was asked to provide feedback about their impressions of the efficiency of staff roles. This process allowed for roles to be clarified regarding scheduling, and facilitation of group sessions and other Project events as well as for the planning of clinical activities (see appendix for sample clinical activity - Drawing Circle), responsibility for task, and an opportunity to identify and address needs of the youth and their families. The identified roles and responsibilities are listed for each position below.

A. Staffing

Clinical staff

Program Manager

- Oversees all aspects of the Project
- Recruits, trains and supervises GROUPMentorZ/ JuniorMentZ
- Supervises Program Coordinator and Research Coordinator
- Works with subcontractors/consultants and Program team to facilitate clinical components (visits, sessions) of the Program
- Develops and implements trainings and/or events related to the Program
- Writes reports, training manuals, and other federal deliverables
- Participates in meetings with evaluators to provide programmatic feedback

Program Coordinator

- Recruits, trains and supervises GROUPMentorZ/ JuniorMentZ
- Documents all contact into Contact Log and or Event Summary
- Develop referral network and system for increasing recruitment of teens and GROUPMentorZ
- Keeps all necessary contact information of participants
- Develops recruitment and referral database

Group Clinician & Clinical Intern

- The primary point of engagement teens and parents

- Develops a relationship with each teen and parent(s)
- Completes phone intake for prospective teen.
- Schedules, coordinates, facilitates Information Session
- Schedules, coordinates, facilitates Pre-JAM Session, JAM Session, Zine Making Sessions, Zine Exhibit, Check out Sessions.
- Completes event summary for each PI event: Pre-JAM Session, JAM Session, Zine Making Sessions, Zine Exhibit, Check out Sessions.
- Documents all contact (outside group or other event) with teens, parents, important others, mentors in contact log.
- Contact all invited guests for each JAM Session and sends out letter of invitation, directions, focus questions
- Administers evaluation instruments

Evaluation Staff (on site)

Evaluation Coordinator

- Obtains consents from teens, GROUPMentorZ and JAM/Exhibit Guests for participation in the Project
- Obtains releases from teens, GROUPMentorZ and JAM/Exhibit Guests for participation in the Project
- Assigns all participants with IDs (codes) to ensure their confidentiality
- Obtains demographics on all participants
- Documents all contact into the Contact Log
- Acts as conduit of information from Project staff to outside Project Evaluators

Operations Staff

- Checks availability of video/digital camera equipment
- Checks room availability and schedules room

B. Focus Groups

At the onset of the Project, CFFC held focus groups, which were videotaped for training purposes. CFFC sponsored a gathering of adult and young adult adopted people. This was an opportunity for adopted people to lend their voices in helping to educate professionals and adoptive parents about the experience of growing up adopted. This group discussed such topics as infant adoption, older child adoption, in-race and transracial adoption, domestic, international, as well as public and private adoption. Many participants showed interest in participating in Project Inclusion as a GROUPMentor. An additional focus group included a diverse group of adults whose lives have been touched by adoption through domestic and international adoption, foster care, guardianship, or kinship. A third focus group included both teens and their families whose lives are touched by adoption. These focus groups provided the CFFC staff with an opportunity to learn from the community's experiences, which informed the development of the Project Inclusion Model Program. The focus groups provided CFFC with the opportunity to gain insight into what adopted adults felt they needed as teenagers. Additionally, the focus group served as a means for the community to come together to share their own experiences regarding how their lives have been touched by adoption, which resulted in an additional resource.

CFFC also held Zine development and brainstorming meetings in order to bring together Zine artists from the area and some of the drama community to help inform and enhance the project.

Individuals experienced in creating, reading, and distributing Zines were invited to CFFC, where they informed clinicians and Project Inclusion staff of the vast Zine community that exists and the various creative media that can be used to produce Zines. These “Zine experts” were also instrumental in conveying the effort and work that goes into Zine production. CFFC staff members viewed one of the Zine expert’s personal collections of Zines acquired throughout the country. By perusing these Zines, CFFC staff better understood the various possibilities of Zine content and how it can be modified into a clinical intervention. This meeting was a jumping off point for the Project and brought forth many ideas for creating Zines in Project Inclusion such as providing teens and GROUPMentorZ with personal journals and folders that they could keep with them on a daily basis. Producing a Zine is an ongoing, constant process. As a result, to capture one’s opinions, reactions, thoughts, and emotions throughout the Project, journals were initially offered to provide participants with the space to record such ideas or feelings any time they presented themselves.

C. Staff Training

The training of CFFC staff began in January 2003, and continued throughout the duration of the Grant. All staff and interns working on Project Inclusion received specialized training and supervision. The CFFC Project Inclusion Management Team conducted annual training sessions. These sessions focused on educating clinicians, clinical interns, operational staff and evaluation staff about Project Inclusion model, goals, and objectives. Topics such as confidentiality, professionalism, race, culture, class, and the roles and responsibilities of each staff member and GROUPMentorZ were addressed. Clinicians and clinical interns received additional training around the clinical interventions created specifically for both the Zine Group and Play With Reality. Clinical group dynamics, expressive therapy techniques, and evaluation implementation were also covered. Adoption 101 training, which highlighted adoption sensitive language as well as the core issues of and normative stages of adoption was provided. Individual and group supervision was offered. Clinical staff co-lead the Zine making sessions and Play with Reality rehearsals. Pre and post sessions were held to “check in” with staff and GROUPMentorZ to debrief and discuss what aspects of the interventions worked well and what challenges were met in the sessions.

In addition to the grant training and supervision, staff also had the opportunity to attend monthly trainings at the Family Connections Training Institute (FaCT) and a summer intensive conference, ARCheology (ARC) (see [Intervention/Activity No.6, this section](#), for more information). These trainings cover a variety of specific issues related to adoption. FaCT and ARC were open to the community and attended by GROUPMentorZ, parents and professionals.

a. Total Number of Staff Trained To Date.

Staff Role	Number Identified	Number Recruited	Number Trained
Clinical Staff	16	12	12
Operations Staff	8	8	8
Evaluation Staff	5	3	3
Clinical Interns	11	11	11

b. Challenges/Barriers to Hiring, Training and Orienting Project Staff. As is normal for child welfare and mental health centers throughout the country, CFFC experienced staff changes during the grant period. This resulted in anticipated delays in aspects of program implementation including the total number of Zine Groups held. As new staff were hired, CFFC was faced with the challenge of training and orienting the staff to the Program. This challenge assisted in identifying additional training needs for Program staff and further streamlining all staff responsibilities. CFFC program staff were able to deconstruct and evaluate their roles. This offered CFFC Project staff the opportunity to restructure Project Inclusion and solidify roles and responsibilities for efficiency on-site and in replication on an ongoing basis.

c. Lessons Learned Regarding Hiring, Training and Orienting Project Staff. The videotapes made for all Zine Making Sessions and JAM Sessions also made very efficient staff training tapes. The tapes have been used for training of CFFC staff and GROUPMentorZ. They have also been helpful to use as reflective and supervision tools in thinking about the clinical needs of the teens, parents, and GROUPMentorZ.

By the second year of the Project, CFFC began editing and burning the training videos in-house which required less technical support and allowed for CFFC clinicians to have more direct feedback around the effectiveness of various clinical interventions used in the Zine Group.

CFFC found the inclusion of an on-site Evaluation Coordinator to be extremely helpful to the evaluation process. Consistent communication between the off-site evaluation team and the CFFC Evaluation Coordinator helped to synthesize the clinical and evaluative components of the Project so that they better met the needs of the program evaluation process as well as the client needs. As a result, the CFFC Evaluation Coordinator was able to share up-to-date information with Evaluators more readily. In turn evaluators were able to provide CFFC with more consistent feedback from key informant interviews, so that CFFC could make needed adjustments especially with regard to training and supervision of GROUPMentorZ.

2. Intervention/Activity No. 2: Develop referral network including Massachusetts Department of Social Services and private agencies that can refer appropriate adolescents who could benefit from these services.

CFFC developed a list of and networked with contact persons at service agencies as well as public and private high schools in the surrounding school districts. Information about Project Inclusion Zine Group and Play With Reality was periodically distributed via email and ground mail to them.

CFFC printed 10,000 Project Inclusion brochures, which were distributed throughout the life of the grant. They were made available at focus groups and information sessions for social service agencies as well as at trainings and speaking engagements conducted by CFFC staff.

CFFC held two presentations for representatives from social service agencies throughout the state. Invitations were sent to one hundred and fifty individuals and organizations including public and private adoption agencies, mental health agencies, lawyers, doctors, legislators, educators, and clergy. The event was aimed at educating professionals about Project Inclusion. In addition to providing education to professionals, CFFC encouraged referrals of teens who could benefit from utilizing Project Inclusion in the future.

CFFC Networked with local adoption and foster care agencies as well as area hospitals, mental health centers, schools, and mentoring agencies and representatives from the Department of Social Services (DSS) in an attempt to secure teen participants as well as GROUPMentorZ participation.

A. Number of providers in the Referral Network

	# of Providers or agencies in referral network	# of Teens recruited from this referral source
Adoption Agencies/Foster Care Mental Health Centers	350	5%
DSS	500	8%
Mentoring/Volunteer agency	3	0%
Hospitals/Medical professionals	100	2%
Schools	100	0%
In House (CFFC) clinicians	20	85%
Other	20	0%

B. Challenges/Barriers to Developing a Referral Network

While developing the database for a referral network was time consuming, even more challenging was obtaining a response to Project outreach efforts. The vast majority of providers contacted through ground mail, e mail or phone did not go on to refer clients to the Project. However, the small number that did refer clients to Project Inclusion remained connected to CFFC at large and referred again to Project Inclusion or to CFFC for other clinical services.

C. Lessons learned About Developing a Referral Network. The following strategies, have proven effective in establishing a referral network:

- Establishing a database including contact information of all area providers (i.e. DSS, foster care, providers, clinicians, and school personal).
- Screening all new intakes entered into CFFC database for potential interest in Project Inclusion.
- Maintaining connections with network through periodic reminder e-mails of upcoming Zine/PWR groups.

3. Intervention/Activity No. 3: Develop the psycho-educational curricula to be used with participating teens and parents.

Guidebooks were developed for parents/guardians and teens participating in both PWR and Zine Groups. Manuals were developed for Clinicians and GROUPMentorZ (with a special section for JuniorMentZ). GROUPMentorZ Manuals, Clinician Manuals, Parent Guidebook, and Teens Guidebook have been developed, edited, and revised based on feedback from staff, teens, parents, and GROUPMentorZ. Manuals and Guidebooks were designed to target specific questions that might come up for any given teen, parent/guardian, GROUPMentor/JuniorMent, or Clinician participating in the Project. They were also designed to offer basic psycho-education around the normative experience in adoption. A Teens Manual and Staff Manual specific to replication were developed and provided to the replication site. CFFC was available for consults to LMACS as they integrated the Project into their curriculum.

In addition to creating manuals/guidebooks, information sessions were offered to participants with break-out sessions for all parent/guardians and teens/GROUPMentorZ during which they were provided opportunities to sample what it might be like to participate in Project Inclusion Zine Group or PWR.

The largest challenge to providing psychoeducation involved limited attendance to some Information Sessions. When parents/guardians were unable to attend Information sessions attempts were made by clinicians to spend extra time during Pre JAM sessions, providing specific information about PI as well as general adoption-specific information.

A. Challenges/Barriers in developing psycho-educational curricula - manuals.

In order to provide the most up to date information to the participants and clinicians within the Program, the curricula and manuals were frequently updated. Clinicians worked collaboratively to make improvements. This was often very time-consuming. At times resources had to be dedicated to other aspects of the Program such as clinical interventions with families.

B. Lessons Learned regarding developing psycho-educational curricula - manuals. Over the course of the Project staff became aware of the demand that Project Inclusion be made available for younger children. As a result of parental requests, CFFC developed a version of Project Inclusion for pre-teens, called Tween Zine. The psycho-educational curricula were augmented slightly to meet the needs of younger children and this group was piloted with success under CFFC Pre and Post Adoption Consultation Team (CFFC Out Patient Department) in the Spring of 2005. At this writing, two successful Tween Zine groups have been held.

4. Intervention/Activity No. 4: Recruit, intake, and plan Zine groups for interested teens (13-18 yrs old) growing up in adoption, foster care, kinship, or guardianship.

Recruitment of Teens

CFFC initially recruited teens from within the CFFC client base (using emails and ground mail and follow up phone calls). This was augmented with the recruitment of participants outside of the CFFC client base once a referral network was established in year two of the Grant. Recruitment Strategies included: hanging fliers at community centers (libraries, bookstores, etc.), advertising in the local community newspaper, advertising in newsletters produced by area adoption support groups, distributing fliers to the Department of Social Services (DSS) and foster care social workers, and contacting area public and private schools. A list of local school contacts—including parent support group leaders, school activity coordinators, school nurses, and school -counselors—was also created and utilized to disseminate information to youth in the area schools. Information Sessions were held to give potential teens an opportunity to become familiar with the Project prior to committing to it.

Throughout the project 55 teens were recruited to participate in one of the eight Zine Groups (Including the Replication Group). Of them 24 participated in and completed a Zine Group. These participants invited a total of 172 important people in their lives to participate in the Project by way of JAM Session or Zine Exhibit. Of those invited, a total of 130 participated in person and 42 contributed in absentia.

The 24 Zine participants were culturally diverse: 35% were of Hispanic descent (U.S., Latin or South American born), 17% were of Indian or Asian descent; 13% were Biracial or Multiracial, 30% were Caucasian, and 9% were African American. Of the 16 participants, 13% were Caucasian, 19% were Indian/Asian, 13% were of Hispanic descent (Latin/South American born), 6% were of Eastern European descent , 19% were Biracial, and 30% reported other heritage or did not self-identify. Among this group, 50% were adopted internationally, 46% were adopted domestically, and 4% (n=1) did not indicate their type of adoption. Forty-three percent were adopted as an older child, forty-six percent were adopted as infants (11% did not report). Transracial placements occurred for 71% of the teens. These statistics are briefly discussed below.

Intake Process

A twenty-minute phone intake was completed with parents of prospective teens. During the intake, information regarding family configuration was gathered and the teens' story of adoption discussed. Screening for developmental delays and/or problematic behavior allowed staff to prepare for needs specific to individual participants.

Project Inclusion Planning

As noted previously, the initial planning stages for the Project Inclusion model occurred at the onset of the grant with focus groups and brainstorming sessions (see Intervention/Activity No. 1 for more information). The focus groups and brainstorming sessions helped to shape the Project Inclusion Model. Staff task planning meetings were implemented soon thereafter to prepare for each Project event. These meetings were held weekly while an active cycle of a Zine Group or Play With Reality was running and monthly when between groups. Task meetings were attended by the Project Manager, Project Coordinator, Evaluation/Research Coordinator, clinicians, and clinical interns.

Project events included Information Sessions, Pre-JAM Sessions, JAM Sessions, Zine Making Sessions or PWR rehearsals, Zine Exhibits with Backstage Party or PWR performance with Cast Party, and Check out Sessions. During Task meetings, each of these events was discussed with regard to timing and structure of the Project as well as clinical and evaluation issues. From these discussions came the solidification of the clinical model for Project Inclusion.

Replication

Project Inclusion Zine Group was augmented with regard to structure, timing, and configuration in order to establish the most efficient and clinically effective manner of running the Zine Group in replication. An information meeting was held for the community of Lowell at Casey Family Services in Lowell, and was attended by staff from the schools, the community college and the Revolving Museum. Zine Group R (the replication Group) was held at a small alternative high school in Lowell MA, Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School (LMACS). All changes to the Project were the result of thoughtful deliberation around lessons learned from previous Zine Groups and were tailored to address specific needs of this replication site.

In preparation for replication, CFFC staff engaged in several meetings and phone calls with the Director of LMACS as well as school personnel. CFFC and LMACS Staff Collaborated to review the Staff and The Staff and Teen Manuals and develop a group agenda and timetable tailored to fit the children's and the school's needs. As part of the training process, one school social worker observed and participated in the Zine group.

Zine Group Teens Interest and Participation Rates

	Zine Group I	Zine Group II	Zine Group III	Zine Group IV	Zine Group V	Zine Group VI	Zine Group R	Zine Group VII
Information Session	3	5	6	4	9	NA	NA	NA
Total recruited	6	9	6	4	13	4	6	7
Pre-JAM Session	3	6	4	4	5	4	1	NA
Kick-off Session	3	5	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
JAM Session	2	3	3	4	2	2	1	NA
Session 1	2	4	3	4	2	4	2	6
Session 2	1	3	3	4	3	3	1	5
Session 3	1	3	3	4	3	4	1	5
Session 4*	NA	NA	NA	4	NA	NA	NA	5
Zine Exhibit	1	3	2	4	3	4	NA	5
Check out Session	1	3	3	4	3	2	1	5
Teens who Completed Project	1	3	3	4	3	4	1	5
Total Family of Teens*	22	27	31	40	16	17	12	7
Total Participants	23	30	34	44	19	21	13	12

* Summer Zine Groups meet for four Zine Making Sessions rather than the standard three Sessions.

* Family members consist of any person identified by the teen as important to him or her.

A. Challenges/Barriers Regarding Recruiting, Intaking and Planning Groups for Teens.

Recruitment

Recruitment challenges throughout the time of the Project included the challenge of retaining the interest of male participants in the Zine Group. Of the total 9 male teens recruited, 6 of them participated in Zine Groups and completed the Project.

The Information Session for Zine Group V was held in conjunction with the Play With Reality Take II Information Session. All of the seven teens who attended expressed sole interest in Play With Reality Take II. teens who were recruited specifically for Zine Group V prior to the Information Session were unable to attend the Information Session. Subsequently all teens for the Zine Group were recruited from referrals by individual therapists' post Information Session.

Attrition

Initial Zine Groups held at CFFC as well as the replication Group experienced attrition of 1-2 participants. However, later Zine Groups at CFFC did not experience attrition. Retention of teen participants was also affected by unforeseeable circumstances. The first Zine Group lost a participant approximately halfway through its course when a crisis arose for the teen and her family. Hospitalization of this teen became necessary to deal with the crisis, and prevented the teen from continuing participation in the group, despite her great desire to see the Zine Project through its end.

Scheduling

More time was needed for the coordination and scheduling of all the necessary events than originally anticipated. Difficulties with scheduling, taking into account the schedules of the teens, the family, and the GROUPMentorZ as well as space availability and the clinician's schedules made scheduling the Project more of an effort than initially imagined.

One component that was particularly challenging to schedule was that of the JAM Session. While the scheduling of JAM Sessions can be a lengthy process, a system was developed that streamlined the process. Despite this, childcare proved challenging for some families, making it difficult for both parents to attend this event. In cases where families chose to bring young children to the JAM Session, the children typically distracted JAM participant's attention from the teen.

Structure/Timing

The greatest challenge during the Zine Making Sessions was that of timing. Adjustments in timing were needed to allow for additional team building activities as well as the larger number of group participants. The group also needed, on occasion, to manage teens' late arrivals. The process of making a Zine proved to be more of a challenge for some teens who required more guidance and support. Subsequently, the clinicians felt a pull between giving the needed direction and allowing the process to unfold. Attempts were made to keep these two aspects in balance while maintaining clinical mindfulness of how instructions may shape the teens' self-concept.

Additional Challenges Specific to Replication

In replication, only one participant completed the Project and that one participant chose a different format for the Backstage Party, which was individualized to meet her needs. Having only one participant proved a challenge to the traditional concept of the Zine Exhibit and perhaps contributed to the participant's decision to forgo a traditional Backstage Party. Her accomplishment was instead celebrated with school staff at the end of the last Zine Making Session as well as with the JAM participants on the day of her JAM Session. Participants at the Replication JAM Session included the teens' foster parents, birth grandparents and a birth sibling. This proved to be a challenging dynamic to manage given that the birth sibling had not seen the grandparents in months and the sibling initially refused to enter the room of the JAM Session (despite having been prepared for their presence). He did, however, participate, but the dynamic resulted in some attention shifting from the teen. Additionally, the foster parents brought three young children into the JAM session (approximately one quarter of the way through) and again this resulted in a shift in attention from the teen as well as a shift in the teen's attention from what was being said to playing with the children.

Due to the school setting, there was no availability of a one-way mirror during the JAM Session and the teen was given various options as to where she'd like to sit in the room. Playing with the children may have helped to provide some distance from what was being said, a benefit that a one-way mirror is intended to produce.

B. Lessons Learned about recruiting, intake and planning Groups for Teens

Recruitment

The Project Inclusion service delivery model has been refined and re-implemented, based on experiences with the previous Zine groups. Throughout the Project periodic improvements were made in the area of recruitment. With respect to the difficulties in recruiting teens, when working with younger children, their parents make the decisions about involvement and commitment. When recruiting adolescents, however, it is necessary for them to 'buy in' of their own volition. They must truly be interested and motivated to participate in the project in order for the project to be successful. Thus, engaging and eventually recruiting the teens resulted in many more meetings and individual communication, prior to their committing to the project. We found it to be particularly useful to make follow-up calls two weeks prior to the start of the group to interested persons and CFFC clients who were sent flyers announcing the start of the group.

Structure/Timing

The act of balancing the less structured time to freely work on Zines with the more structured time engaged in activities and discussion proved challenging with variations in the pacing of each participant's Zine making. GROUPMentorZ were instrumental in supporting teens in their Zine making and helped the teens pace themselves.

Scheduling

The busy schedules of the teens, JAM participants, and GROUPMentorZ, as well as space availability and the availability of clinicians, made scheduling more difficult than initially predicted. It was anticipated that CFFC could accomplish pragmatic tasks much more quickly, but due to the aforementioned recruiting and coordination difficulties, we found it necessary to slow down the process, pay close attention to detail, and increase individual communication. This allowed for staff to be better able to accurately address all that needed to be accomplished in order to ensure a successful and efficient start and completion of the Project. To address the problems of timeliness and scheduling complications, in July of 2003 CFFC hired a staff person (Project Coordinator) to help manage this process. This enabled the clinical team to be more available for any emotional and/or psychological needs that could arise among the participants or family members.

Furthermore, the difficulties encountered with organizing JAM invitees to attend one single JAM Session revealed positive outcomes that had not been anticipated. Because a number of invitees were not able to attend the JAM Session on its scheduled date, staff clinicians requested that they participate through a written letter about the teen's strengths, challenges, and their hopes for the teen's future. These letters became a significant component of the conferences as an additional mode for the teens to acquire information about themselves and came to be called Family Group Contributions (FGC). The teens

enjoyed hearing letters written to them and about them and became involved in this process by selecting specific JAM Session participants to read the letters. Some teens went on to integrate these letters into their Zines.

Replication

During replication, teachers identified participants and there was no opportunity for self-referral. The school may want to consider posting flyers to help facilitate self-referral in the future. Project Inclusion has implications for further use in alternative school curriculums. LMACS is considering how to continue to incorporate Project Inclusion into their present school curriculum.

Recruitment of individuals with multi-systemic stressors (primary support, economic, academic, substance abuse and legal problems), as was the case at LMACS, proved difficult to engage despite the anticipation that recruiting from a self-contained, already established group (within the school) would make it easier to achieve a sizable number of Zine Group participants.

Information Session

Due to time constraints in the Replication Group the Information Session was combined with the initial Zine Making Session which proved efficient and practical for the replication group as well as subsequent Zine Groups. Throughout the Project, there had been ongoing consideration of potentially omitting the Information Session from the Project, especially given that across groups, a larger number of teens were recruited from in-house therapist referrals rather than from the Information Session. There also appears to be maintained interest in and support for the Project despite parents' lack of attendance at an Information Session. However, the parent portion of the Information Session has proven valuable for some parents who were not familiar with CFFC. Rolling important information and activities from the Information Session into the initial Zine Making Session has proved to be an appropriate step for making Project Inclusion more cost-effective and time efficient.

5. Intervention/Activity No. 5: Recruit GROUPMentorZ, young and older adults who have grown up in complex family arrangements to participate in Zine groups and Play With Reality.

Recruitment

Potential GROUPMentorZ for both Zine Groups and PWR Groups were recruited through information sessions, flyers, word of mouth, and college personnel, posting advertisements on volunteer websites, hanging flyers at community centers (libraries, bookstores, etc.), and advertising in the local community newspaper, advertising in newsletters produced by area adoption support groups, distributing flyers to the Department of Social Services (DSS) and foster care social workers. In an attempt to increase referrals of GROUPMentorZ, CFFC eventually networked at local volunteer fairs to recruit potential GROUPMentorZ. Recruitment of GROUPMentorZ also involved outreach to mentoring and volunteer programs and support groups for individuals touched by adoption or foster care. Email, ground mail and follow-up phone calls were used to engage potential participants.

Advertisements for the recruiting of group GROUPMentorZ (and teens) were placed in:

- Adoptive Families Magazine
- Adoptive Families Magazine 2003 Adoption Guide
- America's Family Support Magazine
- Boston Parent's Paper
- Child Welfare League of America Children's Voices
- Child Welfare League of America national conference program
- Resolve of the Bay State national conference program
- Adoption Rhode Island national conference program
- American Infertility Association 2003 National Infertility and Adoption Resource Guide

Training

Following the changes previously noted with AFCMentoring, recruitment and training of GROUPMentorZ was conducted entirely by CFFC. Adoption and Foster Care Mentoring (AFCMentoring) was consulted for assistance in developing the GROUPMentorZ component of the Project. Through collaborating with AFCMentoring, the role of mentors as group, rather than individual mentors began to take shape. This shift was informed by AFCMentoring's suggestion that it would be beneficial to have a highly structured and time-formatted Group Mentoring component to the Zine sessions rather than individual assignments for mentoring within the group. Subsequently, the preferred way to categorize the role of the mentors was as GROUPMentorZ with no individual 'matching' between GROUPMentorZ and teens.

Once potential GROUPMentorZ were recruited, they were required to participate in specific mentor training. The training of the GROUPMentorZ began in January 2003. The trainings incorporated three components: intensive training sessions on GROUPMentoring, programmatic training which educated the GROUPMentorZ on the clinical model highlighting the goals and objectives of the grant, and implementation plans for Project Inclusion. CFFC also covered topics such as confidentiality, professionalism, race, culture, class, Boundary Profile or "the ways a person affects others and is affected by different types of systems and styles of relating" (Kantor and Neal, 1985) and specific issues pertaining to adolescent identity development as it relates to working with adopted teens and their caregivers. Adoption-specific training (Adoption 101) highlighted adoption-sensitive language as well as the core issues and normative stages of adoption. Supervision was provided in check-in and checkout sessions just prior to and following each Project inclusion event. Staff were also available by phone and e-mail for ongoing support to GROUPMentorZ throughout the Project.

In Zine Group IV, staff instituted the use of JuniorMentZ. JuniorMentZ were teens recruited from the existing pool of participants who had completed the Zine Project. JuniorMentZ were trained in a similar fashion to the GROUPMentorZ.

GROUPMentor Manuals were made available to augment the training and provide guidance to the GROUPMentorZ and JuniorMentZ.

In addition to the Project training and supervision, GROUPMentorZ also had the opportunity and chose to attend monthly trainings at the Family Connection Training Institute (FaCT) and a summer intensive conference, ARCheology (ARC). These trainings cover a variety of specific issues related to adoption. FaCT and ARC were open to the community and attended by GROUPMentorZ, parents, and professionals.

Project Inclusion GROUPMentorZ Interest and Participation Rates

	ZG I	ZG II	ZG III	ZG IV		ZG V		ZG VI		ZG R	ZG VII	PWR I	PWR II
	M	M	M	M	Jr. M	M	JR. M	M	JR. M	*	*	M	M
Information Session	2	4	3	1	1	4	1	1	2	*	*	NA	NA
Total recruited	2	4	3	1	2	4	1	1	2	*	*	3	2
Kick-off Session	2	3	2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	*	*	NA	NA
Session 1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	*	*	NA	NA
Session 2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	*	*	NA	NA
Session 3	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	*	*	NA	NA
Zine Exhibit	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	*	*	NA	NA
Completed Project	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	*	*	2	2

Key: ZG = Zine Group M = GROUPMentorZ JR.M = JuniorMentZ PWR= Play With Reality

*Zine Group R and Zine Group VII did not use GROUPMentorZ or JuniorMentZ.

*PWR had returning teens who informally acted as Junior mentors, however they were not formally trained to be JuniorMentZ.

A. Challenges/Barriers to Recruiting Group Mentors. We found that GROUPMentorZ participate in and benefit from the Project in a manner that is very similar to the teens. GROUPMentorZ often find that the Zine Group is their first opportunity to reflect upon and consider issues of adoption and identity in their own lives. GROUPMentorZ may find that personal reactions arise through the process of becoming a GROUPMentor. GROUPMentorZ may uncover personal challenges or experience powerful reactions that they were not previously aware of and have not yet processed.

B. Lessons Learned Regarding Recruiting Group Mentors.

Supervision

Because of GROUPMentorZ potential personal reactions to themes discussed in the Zine Making and PWR Groups, it was necessary to incorporate strategies to ensure that GROUPMentorZ felt prepared to be a GROUPMentor. As part of recruitment, potential GROUPMentorZ completed a volunteer application and consented to a CORI check. Once interviewed and accepted as a GROUPMentor, they signed a volunteer agreement outlining their responsibilities in the Project. GROUPMentorZ then went on to receive specialized training. It is essential for the GROUPMentorZ to have well-defined, consistent, and ongoing supervision and support. GROUPMentorZ were asked to arrive to the group thirty minutes before the teens arrived to assist with set-up. This allowed the GROUPMentorZ time to check in with and obtain support from each other as well as staff. It was an opportunity to be informed of the planned group activity for the day

and prepare for it. Additionally, GROUPMentorZ were asked to create their own Zines and contribute to the Group Zine rather than solely helping the teens with their individual Zines. With their own personal creative outlet, GROUPMentorZ were able to individually address (with staff - independent from the group) the issues that arose for (during check in/out) them and served as models for using these reactions to produce their Zine.

Recruitment

- *General recruitment strategies* - in casting a wide net we have learned that:
 - Websites are cost-effective, time-efficient, and simple, for recruiting GROUPMentorZ.
 - Volunteer fairs require more time, and are more useful for providing information to other organizations than to volunteers themselves.
 - Flyers placed at libraries draw minimal if any interest.
 - Ads in newspapers are costly and not successful in drawing a response.
 - Flyers sent via general mailing are effective in recruiting GROUPMentorZ.
 - Flyers sent through email are cost-effective, time-effective and simple.
- *Scheduling aspects of recruitment*
 - Dates/times for the group must be set before recruitment begins.
 - Events should not be held on holidays.
 - Allowing enough time to commute from work to CFFC is imperative.
- *Retention aspects of recruitment*
 - The two weeks prior to an Information Session is a critical time period for recruiting. This is the time during which follow-up phone calls are most effective.
 - Reminder flyers can be effective, but costly.
 - Reminder phone calls or e mails prior to Zine Making Sessions help keep attendance consistent.

6. Intervention/Activity No. 6: Provide FaCT, ARC, and Adoption 101 trainings to adoption community, including adoption professionals from public and private agencies and GROUPMentor.

CFFC offered a number of different training to parents, professionals, and GROUPMentorZ. Summaries of these trainings as listed below:

The Family Connections Training Institute (FaCT)

The FaCT series is a monthly, half-day trainings for parents and professionals focusing on a variety of topics. FaCT (Family Connections Training Institute) trainings focus on a variety of topics for parents (birth, adoptive, foster, step, kinship, etc.), adopted adults, GROUPMentorZ, professionals, and any other interested adults. All FaCT trainings are facilitated by Dr. Joyce Maguire Pavao and/or CFFC staff. Professional CEUs are available. These trainings cover a variety of specific issues related to adoption. Joan, a clinician, commented, “I have never—and I mean never—attended a training Joyce or CFFC-trained people have done where I haven’t learned something or learned to see things in a different light.”

Some topics addressed at FaCT trainings include:

- Transracial and International adoption
- Attachment
- How domestic violence and other traumatic events effect adoption
- Open adoption
- Sibling connections
- Teen/Youth issues in adoption
- The influence of race, culture, religion, and class on adoption

ARCheology Summer Intensives (ARC):

The ARC Summer Intensives have been educating those who live and work in adoption for 20 years, and are based on Dr. Pavao's Normative Crises in the Development of the Adoptive Family, her years of clinical experience and her consulting and training expertise. The Intensives utilize family systems theory, which is the basis of Dr. Pavao's work. The weeklong conference is held in Provincetown, MA, and professionals and people who live in the world of adoption have come to the ARC Summer Intensives from all over the United States, and from many other countries. A rich exchange of best practice ideas and theories happens each year at the Intensives. During Project Inclusion, ARC was utilized as intensive training for GROUPEntorZ.

Adoption 101 Training

The adoption 101 training is a five-hour adoption-specific training that involves a didactic portion and group discussion. Topics covered are adoption-sensitive language, the core issues of adoption, and normative crises in adoption, and developmental stages considering adoption. The core group of volunteers received Adoption 101 training at CFFC at the onset of the grant. In later years of the grant, CFFC provided similar information to individuals as they joined the Program. In the most recent training, held 2/28/05, 10 volunteers participated in the Adoption 101 training. Between then and the end of the grant period, an additional 6 volunteers received adoption 101 information.

Additional Training

On September 29, 2003, CFFC sponsored Take Care: Caring for the Caregiver. CFFC provided an opportunity for professionals, parents, and GROUPEntorZ who live and/or work in the world of adoption to help combat compassion fatigue. Presentation and workshops topics included: compassion fatigue and how to alleviate it, coping, secondary trauma for professionals and parents, time management, organizing paperwork, collage-making, chair massages, stretching, and river walks.

CFFC began a collaborative effort with Dr. Claire Fialkov and Jacqueline Gagliardi, M.Ed. to train CFFC staff and outside therapists. Under this collaboration, two training series were held. Family Therapy in Adoption which integrated the teachings of family therapy theory and adoption, and New Meaning which used face-to-face supervision, experiential exercises, reflecting teams, and videotaping, to challenge participants to construct new meaning from their work as supervisors.

Training Attendance

Count	Since Start of the Program (October 2001-September 2005)
Staff participating in FaCT	195
Volunteers participating in FaCT	42
Parents/Professionals participating in FaCT	157
Participants in ARC 2002-2005	245

A. Challenges/Barriers

CFFC struggled with increasing parent and providers participation in FaCT trainings. Attendance was lower during different times of the year. For example, trainings in November and December were not well attended, possibly due to the holidays. Therefore, CFFC did not offer training during those months. CFFC worked to expand our marketing and advertising to increase attendance. CFFC also attempted to offer a variety of topics to be sure we were addressing the issues most important to providers and families.

B. Lessons Learned

CFFC requested that all participants of FaCT and ARC trainings complete pre and post evaluations. Participants were asked to provide feedback about the presentation of the information, the quality of the presenter, and the relevance of the topics addressed. CFFC utilized this information to make the trainings more “user-friendly” and provide the information and resources to providers and families within the field of adoption. CFFC identified that many families were interested in information about attachment styles, behavioral interventions, and discussions about international adoption. The results of the evaluations were used to develop marketing plans and increase the attendance at trainings. CFFC found the pre and post evaluations extremely helpful and an effective use of time and resources.

7. Intervention/Activity No.7: Recruit and intake Play With Reality participants (teens in complex families) and plan for Play With Reality sessions.

In September 2003, the concept of Play with Reality (PWR) was developed. PWR was a theatre outreach project for teens and young adults whose lives have been touched by foster care, adoption, and other complex blended families. PWR provided teens and GROUPMentorZ the opportunity to make their Zines come alive through a theatrical performance. Through the use of visual arts, writing, and improvisational acting, young people expressed their experiences and raised awareness about the joys and challenges of adoption and foster care. Play With Reality helped individuals shape their personal experiences into a theatrical performance so that others witness and understand the inner life of those who are adopted. This yearlong performance group project—with the final product being a play—was aimed at answering this important question for teens and young adults: “What do you want people to understand about you that they just don’t get?” Through participation in Play with Reality, teens and young adults received expert training in the performing arts, script writing, production, and technical aspects of theater. Participants were enthusiastic and committed to creating a theatrical production to give voice to their life experiences and perspectives. The emphasis on theater and production of a play about their lives has proven to be much

more appealing than a traditional therapy group.

Recruitment

CFFC initially recruited teens from within the CFFC client base (using emails and ground mail and follow-up phone calls). This was augmented with the recruitment of participants outside of the CFFC client base once a referral network was established in year two of the Grant. Recruitment Strategies included: hanging flyers at community centers (libraries, bookstores, etc.), advertising in the local community newspaper, advertising in newsletters produced by area adoption support groups, distributing flyers to the Department of Social Services (DSS) and foster care social workers, and contacting area public and private schools. A list of local school contacts –including parent support group leaders, school activity coordinators, school nurses, and school counselors–was also created and utilized to disseminate information to youth in the area schools. Information Sessions were held to provide potential teens an opportunity to become familiar with PWR prior to committing to the group.

Intake Process

A twenty-minute phone intake was completed with parents of prospective teens. During the intake, information regarding family configuration was gathered and the teens’ story of adoption was discussed. Screening for developmental delays, problematic behavior, and/or current life stressors allowed staff to prepare for needs specific to individual participants.

Play With Reality Planning

In addition to the Project Inclusion task planning meetings—which were held weekly while an active cycle of Play With Reality was running and monthly when the group was inactive—the PWR facilitators met weekly to plan for each Rehearsal Session. The planning meetings addressed how to strengthen group cohesion (addressing participant conflict, instilling a sense of safety, etc.), how to provide therapeutic and theatrical support for the group, culling material for the final production, and the overall timeline for the performance date.

A. PWR Teens Interest and Participation Rates. Of the 23 teens recruited for PWR, 16 participated and completed this program; five were male and eleven were female. Of this group, 19% were of Caucasian/European descent, 19% were of Indian/Asian descent, 19% were Biracial, 13% were of Latin/South American descent, 13% were of “Other” descent, and 19% did not self-identify. Only 12 reported the type of adoption, of the total group, 25% were domestically adopted, whereas 38% were internationally adopted; 38% were adopted as infants and 19% were adopted as an older child (44% did not report). Only seven reported whether they were in a transracial adoption; of the total group, 19% were transracially adopted and 25% were adopted in-race.

Teen recruitment completion of PWR

	Teens Recruited	Teens Completed
PWR I	10	7
PWR II	13	7
Total	23	14

B. Challenges/Barriers to Recruitment and Intake of Play With Reality participants.

Recruitment

Finding interested teens who wanted to be a part of a theater group was not difficult; however, for those interested teens to commit to the yearlong group was a challenge due to the length of the project. For most of the participants, including both the teens and GROUPMentorZ, two and a half hours every week for the entire academic year, plus increased rehearsals (2.5 - 7 hours three times per week) for the two weeks prior to the final performance, posed a strain on schedules, especially when balancing academic responsibilities (for teens) or work (for MentorZ). At the Informational Session, many participants expressed ambivalence in committing to PWR because they did not yet know schedules of intended extracurricular activities (e.g. school plays, sports teams, choir, etc.). Moreover, some interested teens were unable to commit to the yearlong project due to the commuting distance from their home to CFFC. (To note: there was one participant whose mother drove her an hour and a half each way. This same parent expressed that PWR has helped her daughter more than her many years of individual therapy.)

The first PWR group initially experienced great difficulty in recruiting a sufficient number of teens to participate for the entire year—requiring CFFC to repeat attempts at recruitment. Rather than beginning the project in October 2003, as intended, the actual start of this first PWR group was at the end of January 2004. Nine teens and three GROUPMentorZ started the group; six teens and two GROUPMentorZ actually completed the project.

The second PWR group was able to gather enough participants to begin the program in October 2004, in part to having four teens who completed the first PWR Group. Of the seven teens and two GROUPMentorZ in the second PWR group, one teen chose to discontinue four weeks prior to the final performance due to schedule conflicts that arose at the end of the school year.

Intake

For some parents who had no prior relationship with CFFC, they expressed that the intake itself—the intimate questions about a family’s history and the child’s experiences—felt intimidating and/or invasive. Despite this there were no refusals to complete an intake.

Scheduling

Finding a mutual rehearsal time proved challenging due to the varying schedules of teens, GROUPMentorZ, CFFC staff and facilitators. For the first PWR group, after a group of participants were recruited, individual schedules were considered in finding a regular meeting time for the group. Despite attempts, not all participants’ time limitations could be accounted for. The second PWR group addressed this challenge by providing a yearlong schedule at the Informational Session prior to starting the group, so that participants could plan ahead and adjust personal schedules if needed.

Due to the physical nature of the theater skills training activities, the first PWR group discovered that finding an adequate rehearsal space was important for the success and comfort of the group. Using this information, the second PWR group worked early to

secure a large theater space at an elementary school close to CFFC, where the participants began to meet in February 2005.

Scheduling an appropriate performance space was also a challenge for both PWR groups. Having sufficient time to acclimate to the performance space is important to build comfort and confidence levels of participants. The first PWR group utilized a small theater in Cambridge, MA that was easily accessible by public transportation. Due to the cost of that theater, only two rehearsals were feasible prior to the performance. The second PWR group coordinated a larger theater space on a university campus, which was partially donated. In contrast to the previous year, the group was able to have almost twice as much time to rehearse in the space prior to the performance, which proved helpful in preparing the participants feel ready for the final performance.

Focus

Based on the time limitations of the first PWR Group (having five months to prepare), its structure and focus was different than the second PWR group, which had eight months to prepare. The two differing structures resulted in two focuses: group process versus final production. Interestingly, the two differing structures provided useful information. Specifically, the first group had the Theater Coach and one CFFC clinical intern (the CFFC clinician discontinued with the group midway through the year) leading every session. Because there were only five months to develop the production, the focus was to prepare the group for the performance, rather than on group process. Using material gathered from participants during each rehearsal, the Theater Coach wrote the script and worked on preparing the group for the performance. Additionally, focusing on the final production did not fully allow for the building of group cohesion as was seen in interactions between participants (e.g. disrespectful comments to and about other group members, difficulty in listening and following directions of facilitators).

In contrast, the second PWR group focused on the group process and maintained the goal for participants to produce their own script directly. Based on feedback from participants, they expressed anxiety at not having an actual script from which to work. Instead, the facilitators continued to provide a more open structure—working instead on improvisational exploration issues relevant for those raised in families formed by adoption, foster care, and/or blended families. For the first third of this eight-month group, the Theater Coach was brought in once every month. February 2005, 14 weeks after the start of the PWR group, marked the weekly attendance of the Theater Coach, as well as the group moving into the theater space to rehearse. Again, this second PWR group focused on the group process and participant voices, so rather than producing a script to work from, the group worked on developing the content of the production using improvisational skills and personal experiences. The majority of the performance, while following an outlined structure, was improvised. All of the participants who were part of both PWR groups (four teens) commented that this second PWR group felt more cohesive and collaborative than the first group.

Another obstacle that faced both PWR groups was how to direct the group to explore topics of adoption, foster care, or blended families. When reminding the group that PWR is aimed at exploring identity and increasing self-esteem in youth who have been raised in adoption, foster care, or blended families, many teens expressed that their identity was more than just their adoption background. Despite this, they developed a production in each of the group that addressed salient adoption themes.

Structure/Timing

A consistent challenge for both PWR groups was the number of teens and GROUPMentorZ who were either late or absent from rehearsals throughout the year. It became difficult to build group momentum because the entire group was not consistently present for the entirety of the rehearsal. This obstacle was exacerbated when the group learned specific theatrical techniques, openly shared personal stories, or brainstormed ideas for performance pieces. As a result, significant time was spent on informing absent or late participants on what was missed.

Planning for each session for PWR took more time than initially anticipated. Because of the challenges of the first PWR Group (shortened schedule, losing staff and participants during the group, focus on final production), there was not a clear structure or curriculum for running the second PWR group. The time spent on preparing for each weekly rehearsal during the second PWR group averaged 2-3 hours, which became a strain on the CFFC staff who facilitated the groups.

Roles/Expectations

The first PWR GROUPMentorZ were very active in assisting the CFFC facilitators, but they were almost too involved, staying late to talk in detail about personal experiences. The boundaries between being a GROUPMentor for the teens became a bit blurred with being a facilitator or client. In contrast, the GROUPMentorZ of the second PWR group outwardly expressed confusion about their roles within the group. This difficulty was in large part due to scheduling challenges, as GROUPMentorZ were unable to arrive early to prepare for the session's activities and thus felt like they were in the midst of their own personal process rather than able to entirely focus on the needs of the teens. Frustration towards the CFFC facilitators was expressed, which was difficult to alleviate because the CFFC facilitators often completed group plans on the day of the rehearsal—adjusting the plans based on last minute changes due to absences. These last minute plans prevented the information from being given to the GROUPMentorZ prior to the rehearsal itself.

At times, roles were also unclear for CFFC staff during the second PWR Group. While there was only one CFFC staff member working with the Theater Coach in the first PWR Group, there were three CFFC staff members collaborating with the Theater Coach in the second PWR Group. Based on the ratio of facilitators to participants, it was decided by the CFFC staff to join the PWR group in improvisational activities. A new challenge arose as clinicians partook in skits that warranted psycho-education or processing—shifting roles between participating as an actor and participating as a facilitator.

C. Lessons Learned about Recruiting and Intaking Play With Reality participants.

Recruitment

For teens who had no prior relationship with CFFC, their families needed reassurance in order to feel confident in entrusting their teens to commit to a yearlong theater Project aimed at giving voice to their adoption stories. Answering parents questions, including the unasked questions and general hesitations, has been important in recruitment and retention. Finding interested teens wanting to be a part of a theater group was not difficult; however, for those teens to commit to the yearlong group was a challenge. A possible way to address this challenge would be to shorten the group itself. For instance,

it may be easier for teens to commit to PWR if the group ran twice a week for four months.

Intake

Explaining the value of the family information, answering parent's questions—including the unasked questions and general hesitations—has been an important aspect of the intake process. During the intake, it is also important to clarify the expectations and responsibilities of the participants. Specifically, a discussion about the time commitment—that prompt and regular attendance is vital to the success of the individual and the group.

Scheduling

Based on the experience of the two PWR groups, it was beneficial to provide the entire schedule for the group at the Informational Session. Having this information prior to starting the group allowed participants a clear understanding of the time commitment, as well as an opportunity to plan ahead and adjust personal schedules if needed. Also, it is important to secure an adequate rehearsal space in advance to the start of the group. Having the large theater space in which to rehearse during the second PWR Group contributed to the comfort level of each participant because they were able to acclimate to being on stage and learn the technical aspects of performance theater, such as voice projection.

Focus

Based on the experience of both PWR groups, balancing the focus on both the group process and the final production is important for achieving the goals of the group. Specifically, fostering group cohesion works directly on strengthening relationships between youth; moreover, instilling a sense of safety within a group provides a space in which the teens can feel comfortable enough to explore and express themselves without fear of ridicule or rejection. Furthermore, this comfort with self-expression enabled more in-depth exploration of the adoption experience as compared to the content of the script in the first PWR Group.

Clarifying the focus of the PWR Group to the teens is also imperative for the success of the group. Specifically, despite being stated in the Informational Session, it was necessary throughout the course of the group to remind the teens that the PWR Group is meant to educate and illuminate the public about the experience of teens raised in adoption, foster care, and/or complex blended families. Throughout both PWR groups many teens' expressed discomfort on focusing on adoption, foster care, or complex blended families, because it is not all of who they are. It proved beneficial to openly acknowledge and address this concern; while also staying firm about the goal of the group. This stance maintained that the group's collective experience around adoption is an important one.

Structure/Timing

A clear policy on absences and tardiness to groups should be presented at the Informational Session and strictly enforced throughout the PWR group. Maintaining this expectation preserves the safety of the group. Group stability is vital for teens touched by adoption and foster care because not knowing who will be present or late from group to group can be triggers to their personal experience of loss and distract them from the group process.

Creating a set curriculum, based on the learnings of the two PWR groups, would greatly

reduce the planning time that is invested in each rehearsal. Also, providing the PWR Group with a general outline for the performance (e.g. [scene about birthmother]; [scene about a couple thinking about adopting a child]; etc.) may alleviate participants' stress about creating their own script, while also reiterating the focus and intent of the PWR group on the experience of adoption.

Roles/Expectations

Having an established curriculum may help to clarify the GROUPMentorZ' roles within the PWR group, which was a challenge for the second PWR group because they were not able to meet with the CFFC facilitators prior to each rehearsal because of schedule conflicts. With the curriculum, the GROUPMentorZ would not have to arrive early to learn about the rehearsal plans because they can prepare in advance about the content of the rehearsal and contact the facilitators with questions, ideas, or concerns prior to the rehearsal session. Rather than meeting early, the GROUPMentorZ and CFFC facilitators should meet after each rehearsal to process GROUPMentorZ and CFFC facilitators' experiences of the rehearsal as a way to immediately address any concerns that may arise.

In order to maintain a clear clinical role for CFFC staff during PWR rehearsal, participation in skits is discouraged. Instead, staff can coach participants in further exploration of a particular character, rather than play a character (e.g. a birthmother) that may affect the therapeutic relationship between facilitator and participant.

IV. Project Outcome Evaluation/Immediate Outcomes

1. **Immediate Outcome No. 1: Creation of clinical model that enables adolescents to develop relationships with other teens who share similar backgrounds and promotes self-awareness and self-esteem.**

A. **Findings:** Project Inclusion’s clinical model was structured to foster the development of relationships between teens raised in adoption, foster care, and kinship care as well as enhance self-esteem and self-awareness. The model is outlined below:

Phone Intake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20 minutes long ▪ Parent & Staff (teen when indicated) ▪ Screen for appropriateness ▪ Gather family history, create a genogram
Information Sessions <i>(optional)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 hours long • Parents, Teens, GROUPMentorZ, 2 Clinicians • Meet other potential Teens, GROUPMentorZ, and the staff • Teens or GROUPMentorZ from past groups are present to answer questions and share what the project was like for them • Teens, GROUPMentorZ, Parent Guidebooks are made available • Group schedule is passed out • Activities to give guests a feel for the Project
Pre-JAM Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 min -1 hour long • Teen, Clinician, Parent • JAM Session guest list is created • Teen (with help of clinician and/or parent) creates a list of questions to help guide the JAM discussion (see appendix)
JAM Sessions <i>(optional)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 hours • Teen, invited guests, 2 clinicians • People invited to the JAM Session make a Family Group Contribution (FGC) either by attending the JAM Session or by sending something to the JAM Session if they can’t attend. Some of those who attend may also decide to bring something in that reminds them of the teen or is in some way symbolic of the teen. • Invited guests (including parents, coaches, aunts & uncles, cousins, siblings, teachers, therapists, club leaders, mentors, friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc.) discuss the teens’ strengths while the teen watches from behind a one-way mirror with a clinician.
Zine Making Sessions or PWR Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zine Group: 4-9 hours total split up into 1-3 hour sessions • PWR Group: 2 1/2 hours per week of an academic year • Teens, Clinician(s), Theater Coach (for PWR) • Sessions were structured to incorporate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GROUPMentorZ and JuniorMentZ arriving 30 minutes early to set up and prepare for each session, and receive instruction and supervision around mentoring responsibilities. ○ Development of Group rules. ○ Warm-up or team building activities to foster cohesion and safety.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time to process the activities, experiential Zine pages or theater skits worked on during each Session. ○ Technical assistance around structuring the layout of Zines and use of the materials. ○ Technical assistance around theater skills (PWR only). ○ Exploration of identity. ○ Support around integrating and representing one’s identity in the Zine. ○ Process around JAM Session experiences (copy of JAM notes were given to each teen). ○ Time to work independently and cooperatively on Zines or theater skits. ○ The opportunity to explore current events in their lives. ○ Discussion of common experiences as adopted individuals. (i.e. managing other’s ignorance about what it is like to be adopted). ○ GROUPMentorZ were directed to take regular breaks from their individual Zine making to engage with different teens and offer support (Zine Group only). ○ GROUPMentorZ directed to model/support participation in skits. ○ Various forms of expressive medium introduced. ○ Participants were allowed to take construction paper to work on their Zines at home (Zine only). ○ Use of journals to promote self-reflection.
<p>Zine Exhibit & Backstage Party</p> <p>Or</p> <p>PWR performance & Cast Party</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 hours • Teens, GROUPMentorZ, Clinicians, Invited Guests • Celebration of the completion of the Zines; Display of the Zines or Play production of skits and scripts created and acted by Play With Reality participants. Celebration of PWR completion at the performance (PWR only). • Backstage process/closing • Opportunity for invited guests to process what the Project has meant for their family and to provide feedback
<p>Checkout Session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hour • Teen, Clinician • Teen collects his/her Zine or PWR materials and processes final thoughts about the Zine Group/PWR Group • Clinician makes referrals for teen and his/her parent

B. Interpretation: Project Inclusion has been structured in a manner aimed at enhancing relational development as well as self-esteem and self-awareness. The curriculum and

structure of Project inclusion was shaped during the running of Zine Groups I through III. At its inception, a single cycle of the Zine Group consisted of Information Session, Kick-Off Group, Intake meeting/Pre-Family Group Conference (FGC) (later re-named JAM Sessions), three Zine Making Sessions, a Reunion Group (later re-named a Zine Exhibit and Backstage Party) and a Check out Session. Twenty-two activities were developed for use in either the information Session, Zine Making Sessions or Backstage Party. These activities were aimed at establishing a safe environment, building relationships, and supporting teens around adoption-specific discussion and exploration.

Zine Group IV was a turning point in the Project, where efforts began to shift from developing a solid, clinically effective group model to altering the model in preparation for replication and continued use without government funding. To this end, Zine Group IV saw the elimination of the Kick-Off Group. It was initially believed that a Kick-Off Session was needed to give participants a sense of the Group before they fully committed as well as to provide them with an opportunity to share questions, fears, and hopes for upcoming JAM Sessions. However, we found that on average, 1 person voluntarily departed from any given Group whether there was a Kick-Off Session offered or not. Additionally, Zine Group IV saw a shift from intakes completed in person to completed over the phone. In Zine Group VI, the need for phone intakes solidified as the Information Session aspect of the Project was removed from the Group cycle. Phone intakes became an especially important tool in screening clients and Pre-JAM Sessions were also now perceived as an intake meeting. Any information disseminated to participants and their guardians at the time of the Information Session was now provided to them during the Phone Intake and/or at the Pre-JAM Session and then reviewed again at the first Zine Making Session. CFFC recognized that holding Information Sessions could prove useful in getting the parent and teen “buy in” to the Project. However, removal of the Information Session helped make the Zine Group more marketable and fiscally feasible.

Additionally, the concept of Play With Reality was developed in Year Two. PWR was conceived as a means for “Zines to come alive” on stage. However, we soon discovered that a minimal number of Zine teens were also interested in theatrical expression of their stories. It seemed that teens who choose the Zine Group preferred the magazine-making medium of expression and the PWR group needed to be marketed to a much wider audience. PWR was re-structured in its second year to follow the Project Inclusion clinical model more closely as noted below.

2. Immediate Outcome No. 2: Greater self-awareness among teens from listening to the thoughts and feelings of those individuals whom they have invited to their family group conference.

- A. Findings: Unfortunately, there are no comprehensive data that enable assessment of this outcome. When the timing of questionnaire administration was shifted to twice (pre-Zine, pre-PWR and post-Zine, post-PWR), there was no consistent measurement that provided data for this outcome. Anecdotal comments from some teens indicate that they did develop a greater understanding of their strengths and challenges from JAM session feedback. For example, one teen, when asked if there was anything she brought to the Zine group that people had mentioned in her JAM session, she immediately stated, “leadership,” and commented how this contributed to the group functioning. During JAM sessions, many teens’ emotional responses (laughter, tears) and comments (of agreement,

of acknowledgment) reflected their awareness of how others viewed them. One teen drew from the comments she heard in her JAM session to respond to her JAM participants and acknowledge some of her challenges and strengths. However, when asked after the Zine group ended to reflect on feedback from the JAM session, some teens were unable to recall what they had heard.

- B. Interpretation: Although many teens showed awareness of the perceptions of others during JAM sessions, there was some variation in teens' ability to recall the feedback following the Zine group completion. There are some possibilities for this variation. Some teens may have incorporated others' perceptions into their sense of self in such a way that they could not distinguish after the Zine group comments made during JAM sessions. For some teens, the JAM session feedback, while helpful, may not have been new information, and so might not have stood out in their memory. Some teens may simply have forgotten the feedback received during the JAM session. However, despite the variation in teens' recall of feedback received during the JAM session, their comments during JAM and subsequent Zines reflect a general positive impact of the JAM feedback on the teens.

3. Immediate Outcome No. 3: Increasing self-esteem among teens through exploration of their identities in creating their Zines.

- A. Findings: Analyses conducted to test pre- and post- differences in responses on quantitative measures of self-esteem and self-image yielded no significant differences. However, video ratings and narrative data indicate that teens' level of self-esteem and comfort level with self did improve as a result of the Zine groups.

From the videotapes of Zine sessions, five dimensions of self-comfort and self-esteem were rated: self-expression, exploration of the world, help seeking, self-exploration, and self-other comfort. Video ratings were examined in two ways - 1) improvement across three of five dimensions of self-comfort within each teen, and 2) improvement in each dimension across all teens - there is evidence that the Zine groups had a positive impact. There was improvement in three of five dimensions of self-comfort/self-esteem among 80% of the teens. Viewed another way, 90% of teens showed improvement in self-expression, and 70% of teens showed improvement in exploration of the world, and in self-other comfort, respectively.

Narrative data reveal that teens found the Zine group to be a powerful facilitator of their self-image/self-esteem. For example, one teen noted that as a result of the group, she is happier and has more energy. Prior to the group she thought she was the only adoptee with challenges, but she learned that she's not the only one and she learned to deal with those challenges in a more positive way. Another teen, after completing her Zine group voiced a new perspective about herself and others, noting, "I don't care what others think of me." Another teen found a new perspective on using her strengths to manage her challenges. Whereas before the Zine group she didn't know how, after the group, she noted her persistence in trying to use her strengths in a compensatory way. Parents have noticed the improvements as well, "She has been supported, affirmed, and as a result, shows signs of confidence." [There is] "more confidence - more openness about adoption issues and more expression of emotion and affection." The Group Brought her back to her artistic expression of her feelings - seems more at peace."

- B. Interpretation: There are several implications of these findings - some regarding the groups and one regarding the evaluation. Regarding the groups, there are process and content implications. First, as a process implication, teens received and perceived support as a function of participating in the group. This support was provided through other teens and through the GROUPMentorZ. Having the opportunity to talk with others about their unique and common adoption experiences may have provided a sense of community in dealing with the positives and challenges associated with being adopted. For example, one teen noted, "The typical adopted person wouldn't sit down and do a Zine by themselves. Doing It in a group allows them to get to know themselves better." Some of the activities implemented in the groups were particularly helpful, including the "Interview with the Reporter" activity, in which teens interviewed each other about their adoption experiences. The improvement occurred among multiple dimensions of self-comfort/self-esteem, reflecting the breadth of impact on teens' sense of selves.

The failure to find consistent significant differences among the questionnaires used is puzzling. Two possibilities emerge. First, the sample sizes for the Zine groups (N=24) and PWR (N=16) - separately and combined, might not have been large enough to statistically detect clinically meaningful change. Second, the measures selected may not have been sufficiently sensitive to capture clinically significant change.

4. Immediate Outcome No. 4: Supervision that allows GROUPMentorZ to act as supportive and encouraging role models for teens.

- A. Findings are from narrative data from GROUPMentorZ. Supervision served several purposes. First, GROUPMentorZ found supervision to be quite helpful in providing feedback and direction for their roles with the teens. As Zine groups would start, Mentors sometimes found that they were unclear about how much of their role was helping the teens with their Zine and how much was doing their own Zine. Supervision meetings served to clarify this for GROUPMentorZ. One mentor noted, "I thought in the beginning it was more of a technical mentor program, but this is a better way to do it." Second, supervision served to help GROUPMentorZ explore their own experiences. Another mentor noted this additional benefit of supervision: "supervision definitely made me more aware of my experiences and learn more about myself." Third, supervision served to facilitate relationships among GROUPMentorZ, as well, "We got closer in supervision... even though our strengths are really different."
- B. Interpretation: GROUPMentorZ supervision enabled GROUPMentorZ to meet their individual needs for self-exploration as adopted persons so that they could be ready to help facilitate the process among the teens in the Zine sessions. The group nature of the supervision provided an opportunity for additional bonding among Mentors.

5. Immediate Outcome No. 5: Increasing self-esteem among teens through exploration of their identity in producing their own play production.

- A. Findings: Analyses conducted to test pre- and post- differences in responses on quantitative measures of self-esteem and self-image yielded no significant differences. However, “Private I” responses indicate that teens’ level of self-esteem and comfort level with self did improve as a result of their involvement in PWR. For example, one teen appreciated being able to “talk about your problems and have a group that would support you.” Another teen poignantly noted that PWR is about working on “how to find our voices.” And a third teen emphasized the value of PWR in providing the opportunity “to express your thoughts to people like me”. This same teen noted how hard it is for internationally adopted youth, “when they don’t know how to speak the language to make new friends and adjust to a new life.”

- B. Interpretation: Through the group-based experiential and acting focus, PWR provides an important experience for teens to explore themselves, find their voices and experience the support of a community who shares their history. The activities in PWR provided a different group-based opportunity from those in Zine groups and may provide an alternate vehicle to facilitate an enhanced sense of self for some teens.

V. Project Outcome Evaluation/Intermediate Outcomes

1. Intermediate Outcome No. 1: Model is revised based on feedback from evaluative procedures and replication.

- A. Findings: Evaluative instruments completed by teens and/or GROUPMentorZ provided feedback to staff that informed the development and revisions of the Project Inclusion model including both Zine and PWR groups. These instruments included the Narrative interview (completed by teens in the Zine groups), Exit Interview (completed by teens and GROUPMentorZ in PWR and Zine Groups), Client Satisfaction Survey (completed by teens and GROUPMentorZ in PWR and Zine groups), and Private I (completed by teens and GROUPMentorZ in the PWR group - Private I questions were reflective of the questions in the Narrative Interview used with the Zine Group). Additionally, Project staff and Replication staff provided pertinent information for revisions in the context of an interview with the Research Coordinator.
- B. Interpretation: Staff were able to revise the model based on feedback from evaluation and replication. Narrative instruments in particular revealed the most pertinent suggestions from participants and GROUPMentorZ. Some suggestions included eliminating the use of the Journal, fostering more communication between group participants, restructuring the time of the group and keeping particularly well-liked activities. Staff made changes to the model to integrate these suggestions and found that a core group of activities helped to foster the most communication and restructuring time helped to increase the total number of participants and allowed for individual time preparing and supporting volunteers prior to and following group sessions.

2. Intermediate Outcome No. 2: Replication site undergoes extensive training (and receives ongoing TA) to conduct Zine group at their agency

- A. Findings: The LMACS underwent extensive training and ongoing technical assistance to plan and replicate the Zine group at its school. CFFC staff held several meetings with school staff to plan the replication and provide training on the process and content of implementation. Feedback from CFFC and school staff indicates that the pre-Zine training was well conceived and executed. One school staff person noted, “All on CFFC’s end has been thorough. They’ve been very patient,” and another noted, “the written materials were very clear.”
- B. As planned, CFFC staff ran the Zine sessions; a member of the school staff was present to assist. There were several challenges facing this replication effort. They included: 1) Few students were on campus on the weekday selected to run the sessions, thus limiting the number of available students who participated. As a result, only one teen participated; 2) insufficient attendance in Zine sessions by the school clinician; 3) the school atmosphere was different from agency (more laid back), resulting in some inter-organizational glitches in communication; and 4) differences emerged in institutional functioning that were not anticipated. Despite these challenges, the Zine sessions were implemented as planned and the single participant found it helpful: “It’s a fun way to get your feelings about adoption and foster care off your chest and relate to other people.”
- C. Interpretation: CFFC staff were able to provide training and replication of the content and process of the Zine. However, LMACS was not able to benefit as much as it might have - either in the number of teens who participated, or in the degree to which the system

incorporated the Zine group into its schedule and operation. One important implication is (as noted by CFFC staff) “the need to be aware of the culture of a particular organization and how that culture may impact how a replication project is carried out.”

3. **Intermediate Outcome No. 3: Create written manuals describing clinical model and implementation of the program directed at clinicians, parents, adolescents, and GROUPMentorZ.**

A. **Findings:** Separate manuals were created for clinicians, parents, teens, and GROUPMentorZ. They were developed, as outlined below, to guide each through their experience of and role in the Zine Project.

- **Clinician Manual**

Clinician Manuals contain psycho-educational curricula and outline the structure of Project Inclusion including intake, Information Session, Pre JAM Session, Zine Making Sessions/Play With Reality Sessions, Zine Exhibit & Backstage Party/PWR Performance, and Checkout Sessions/Cast Party. The activities, tasks and clinical interventions specific to each of these events are highlighted in the Clinical Manual. Specific guidelines are provided for all Project-specific clinical interventions.

- **GROUPMentorZ Manual**

The GROUPMentorZ Manuals include general psycho-educational information regarding families touched by adoption such as positive adoption language and a list of resources. It also contains a thorough description of the activities used in the Zine making and PWR groups. The manual offers suggestions around how to engage in the group as a GROUPMentor and provides clear concise guidelines for expectation and responsibilities for the GROUPMentor.

- **Teens Guidebook**

The Teens Guidebook is especially designed to engage teens. It was written in the casual lexicon of today’s teen and simulates what a Zine might look like. It provides a step-by-step breakdown of what a teen can expect as they participate in the Project. A schedule of events is provided and each event is clearly outlined from Information session to Check Out Session. The Teen Guidebook is aimed at reducing apprehension and/or anxiety around joining a new group and answering anticipated teen questions.

- **Parents Guidebook**

The Parent’s Guidebook was essentially designed to be the adult version of the Teens Guidebook, containing the same basic information as well as a list of resources specific to individuals parenting in families formed through adoption, foster care and kinship care.

B. **Interpretation:** Teens, Parents, GROUPMentorZ and Clinicians found the manuals to be useful guide, providing an overview of the Project, and outline of ones role as well as a list of resources. Staff at the replication site reported it particularly useful stating that

the manual was clear and thorough. GROUPMentorZ also noted their manual to be helpful with regard to the resources listed in it.

4. Intermediate Outcome No. 4: Increasing understanding and cognizance among teens regarding their “story” from interacting with other teens and GROUPMentorZ with similar stories.

- A. **Findings:** Teens who participated in either Zine groups or PWR derived a heightened awareness of their unique and shared adoption experiences. Narrative, video of Zine sessions, and Private I data point to this enhanced understanding. Teens’ comments during adoption discussions reflected their developing awareness about their own history (for example, one teen realized that she knew little about her country of birth). One GROUPMentor provided a rich description: “A place to express yourself, be safe and to meet some people that are just like you that have some amazing stories to share.”

Event summary data indicate that there are challenges in both the Zine and PWR formats to promoting and maintaining group cohesiveness, while minimizing the formation of small cliques and individual isolation that can typically happen among adolescents. The active observation and therapeutic involvement of clinical staff generally enabled the positive and validating dynamics to characterize group functioning.

These experiences also helped teens find support for the ways that they are like other non-adopted teens, as well. For example, one Zine participant echoed the sentiments of others when she expressed the hope that the Zines will help others see “how we are as people, not just adopted.”

- B. **Interpretation:** The dynamics that unfold when teens come together in a therapeutically supervised forum to individually and collectively explore one’s experiences can provide an important process through which teens increase their understanding of their history and “story.”

5. Intermediate Outcome No. 5: Increased understanding and knowledge of adoption professionals and parents regarding the issues faced by adolescents growing up in complex families.

- A. **Findings:** CFFC increased the understanding and knowledge of adoption professionals and parents by providing monthly FaCT trainings on topics including but not limited to: attachment and bonding; adoption talk by professionals; open adoption; older child placement; anger management; race, culture, religion and adoption; and clinical issues in working with youth and adoptive families.

- B. **Interpretation:** The following is a summary of evaluations completed by 85 participants in FaCT trainings conducted by CFFC staff between November, 2001 and January 2003. Participants in the trainings were asked to complete evaluation forms at the end of each session. Responses were summarized by CFFC staff on one form and forwarded to the evaluator for review and synthesis. This report is a summary of the findings of the evaluation by participants across all of the trainings.

- *Trainings matched overall expectations*
 - The vast majority of participants agreed that the trainings matched their expectations. Thirty-five participants reported a complete match and 41 reported a high level of matching between their expectations and the content of the trainings. Only 9 participants reported that their expectations were only partially met or not met at all.
- *Most useful/interesting parts of the training*
 - The elements that participants found most useful echoed across the various training topics. This suggests that CFFC has a successful “formula” for presenting information in a way that is accessible, pertinent, and meaningful to the participants. Elements of the “formula”, as reported by the participants, include:
 - extensive use of case studies to illustrate the theoretical framework which is helpful to participants in integrating theory and practice;
 - the use of videos that also makes theoretical information more practical and accessible;
 - the opportunity to discuss and share information with other clinicians;
 - specific strategies and suggestions for adoption practice; and,
 - panels of individuals with direct personal experience with adoption along with the opportunity to interact with the panel (and with presenters).
- *Least useful/interesting parts of training*
 - Although most participants were very positive about the trainings, there was a minority who found elements of the “formula” not useful. Some of the parts of the training participants found least useful were the very elements that most participants found most useful. These included: clinical examples/cases; too much discussion; and too many charts and graphs. At least half of the comments provided by participants under this heading actually suggested there be more of the elements mentioned in the previous section, i.e., more discussion, more techniques and strategies, more stories, and larger panels. Overall, these comments represent an endorsement of the “formula” and the content of the trainings - participants wanted more of what they found most useful - rather than criticism of the training content or process.
- *What was gained from training*
 - Participants in general felt that they had gained valuable insights about and heightened sensitivity to adoption issues through the trainings. They noted that what they gained had immediate practical utility in their clinical practice, such as:
 - better understanding of issues coupled with a new outlook on adoption;
 - an understanding of the “big picture” of adoption; including the complexities in relationships, needs, and perspectives when working with families of adoption;
 - valuable tools (e.g., genograms) and techniques for practice.
 - These gains should have a direct impact on the participants’ practice and thus benefit more children and families of adoption. An understanding that adoption issues are complex and vary according to

each involved individual's perspective will aid the professionals in attending to the complexities with more sensitivity and awareness.

- *Training addressed issue*
 - The vast majority of participants (76) felt that the training successfully addressed the issue that it targeted. Only 7 participants felt that the training did not succeed adequately in addressing the session topic. The participants had several consistent suggestions for improving the trainings. These included:
 - an additional, more advanced session on the topic;
 - more of the specific strategies for practical application of the ideas presented;
 - more people on the panels to broaden the range of experiences reported on.
 - As with the “least useful” comments, these points indicate an overall satisfaction with both the process and content of the training. There appears to be a genuine hunger among attending professionals for more of what they learned in these presentations.
- *Summary*
 - The evaluations completed by participants in the FaCT trainings offered by CFFC were overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic. The fact that most participants found the content of the trainings helpful confirmed that the Center was successfully meeting a training need of adoption professionals. In addition, the “formula” for presenting material was consistently endorsed by participants, indicating that the process for imparting information is also successful.

6. Intermediate Outcome No. 6: Reveal of group work, thoughts and feelings of group participants to parents and individuals in the community: Zine Exhibit, Play production.

- A. Findings: The Project provided teens with a venue to share thoughts and feelings with parents and the community in a manner that allowed teens the control to decide what to reveal or keep private about themselves. Great care was taken by staff to foster an environment that provided the necessary safety and containment for teens to share their thoughts and feelings. To this end, every group developed a list of rules/guiding principals. Additionally, clinical activities and interventions were developed to help foster group cohesiveness. The model allowed teens in the Zine Group the choice of whether or not show off their Zines in a Zine Exhibit as well as the opportunity to verbally share as little or as much as they wanted to about their Zines and experience in the Project. In PWR teens' developed a story that was reflective of their own stories to the extent that they felt comfortable. The cast was allowed to choose whether or not to hold a question and answer session at the end of the performance in which they could answer in character or as themselves.

Parents and important others in teens' lives attended the culminating event for the Zine group and PWR. After the completion of each forum, these individuals were given the opportunity (verbally or in writing) to express their thoughts about the teens' experiences. Some parents acknowledged realizing - at a new and different level - the issues that their transracially adopted teens have faced. Other parents noted the value of

the Zine group or PWR for their child: “I mostly loved that she had the chance to meet other teens with histories of adoption and to hear from others whose situations she might not see as even more different than her own!” “The issue of adoption runs deep with my daughter, and surely with the others.”

B. Interpretation: Teens revealed themselves, their work, thoughts and feelings through artistic expression fostered by Project Inclusion. Parents and community members felt the impact of teens’ expressions through the expressive medium of Zines and or a theatrical performance Through the opportunity to see and hear about the experiences that teens had with Zine groups and PWR, parents’ understanding of their child’s issues were enhanced. A few parents mentioned seeing changes in their child at home. However, since teens vary in the degree to which they share about their experiences with their parents, and parents vary in their observational skills with their teens, this may not be the case for all families. Parent participation in JAM sessions, Zine Exhibit sessions and PWR performances are likely an important vehicle to promote increased understanding. Below are some impressions parents and community members shared in response to Zine and the PWR performance:

- *“I thought they were a valuable keepsake for the participants of a supportive experience”*
- *“Impressed by the variety of themes and the creativity of participants.”*
- *“I feel like I got to know a lot of the kids personally before I met them.”*
- *“Thought it was a good idea to have time for these kids to put some of their deeper thoughts on paper.”*
- *“I liked the artwork and the willingness to stand in front of everyone and share about their Zine.”*
- *“It was great to see individual Zines. Photos and letters added a lot.”*
- *“All different, just like the teens - very interesting...amazing depth.”*
- *“All creative, all unique... self-expression is very powerful.”*
- *“These were quite impressive. I feel I got to know the kids a bit through them”*
- *“They are so creative and artistic! I was impressed by how each person expressed themselves and addressed their own issues.”*

VI. Project Outcome Evaluation/Long Term Outcomes

1. Long Term Outcome No. 1: Expanded capacity of agencies across the nation to establish and maintain services for adolescents in adoption, foster care, kinship, or guardianship families

A. Findings: Throughout the grant period, Dr. Pavao traveled across the United States offering speeches at a variety of trainings such as The North American Council on Adoption and the Child Welfare League of America National Conference. These trainings included gatherings of professionals within the adoption field and those involved in more general social service and mental health agencies across the United States (see appendix for a complete list of trainings). During the speeches, Dr. Pavao discussed the importance of ongoing sibling relationships and the unique attachment needs of children touched by adoption, foster care, kinship care, and guardianship. Dr. Pavao also offered information about how a child’s self-esteem can be effected by their experiences in adoption, foster care, kinship care, and guardianship. By speaking at over 100 trainings, Dr. Pavao worked to inform and educate over 21,000 providers across the nation regarding the importance of establishing programs such as Project Inclusion as a means to foster self-esteem in adolescents raised in adoption, foster care, kinship, or guardianship families.

Grant Period	Number of trainings facilitated	Approximate number of attendees at the trainings
10/01/01-9/30/02	18	5,125
10/1/02-9/30/03	34	6,625
10/1/03-9/30/04	24	4,975
10/1/04-9/30/05	26	4,800

B. Interpretation: It is expected that informing and educating over 21,000 providers across the nation regarding the importance of establishing programs such as Project Inclusion is a means to foster self-esteem in adolescents raised in adoption, foster care, kinship, or guardianship families. However, it is out of the scope of this project to fully evaluate this outcome.

2. Long Term Outcome No. 2: Teens growing up in adoption, foster care, kinship, and guardianship actively explore their experiences and how those experiences have influenced who they are. They are empowered by a real knowledge of themselves and what makes them unique.

A. Findings: Event summaries indicate that through Zine Groups and PWR, teens were provided with opportunities to explore themselves and their histories. Each forum provided a variety of activities, ranging from individual exercises (e.g., construction of the Zine, individual responses to “Private I”), to dyadic exercises (e.g., Reporter interview, responses to “Private I”), to small group activities (e.g., group Zine, group role playing activities). Event summaries, video data and narrative data indicate that teens engaged in these activities to conduct the self-exploration and sharing with others. Staff noted that in both the Zine Group and PWR teens explored themes around their experiences of adoption including thoughts about birth families, search and reunion, multicultural identity, country of origin, and siblings.

While certain activities engaged certain teens more than others, the overall experience facilitated a greater understanding of self and others like one. A parent recognized this

when she noted, “[PI] is a creative way to process feelings that is valuable, very different from therapy.”

The long-term impact of PI was particularly apparent during a Zine Reunion gathering that brought together teens from Zine Groups 1-IV. This gathering took place between three and 9 months after completion of Zine Groups. Although the predictable grouping of teens from the same Zine Group initially occurred, teens easily engaged in a new activity designed to facilitate connections among all Zine group teens.

There are no other long-term follow-up data that could provide additional findings regarding this outcome.

- B. Interpretation: The experiences that teens in the Reunion Zine had suggest that teens are able to retain the ability to access, explore and express themselves and their unique qualities. Common elements in the two PI components (Zine Group, PWR), a group-based opportunity to individually and collectively explore one’s history and experiences through therapeutically supervised activities, appear to be important elements of change for teens.

3. Long Term Outcome No. 3: Knowledge disseminated to the field.

- A. Findings: Information about Project inclusion as a new innovative means of supporting positive identity development and relationship building in teens raised in adoption, foster care or kinship care was disseminated across the nation. As mentioned earlier, Dr. Pavao was featured at over 100 trainings and conferences. In response to this effort, various social services agencies have expressed and continue to express interest in receiving information about the process of implementing the Program at sites through out the United States.
- B. Interpretation: While it is worth noting that agencies have expressed an interest in replicating the Program as a direct result of receiving information about the Program, at present it is not possible to interpret the impact of disseminating the knowledge without additional funding for a longitudinal study.

CFFC intends to continue to work for enduring macro level changes in regard to how youth identity development and relationship building fostered and maintained within the adoption and social service professions. Dr. Pavao will continue to advocate for policy change that recognizes the importance of sibling relationships for children who are being raised separate from their siblings.

Dr. Pavao and CFFC staff will continue to offer trainings about the Project Inclusion Program. In Fact, a Project Inclusion training for parents and professionals is scheduled to occur on February 22, 2006 in Cambridge, MA.

CFFC also plans to distribute the four manuals developed during the grant period. These manuals are intended to assist other agencies with providing groups that support positive teen identity development and relationship building to adoptive families within their community. CFFC is passionate about our belief that youth who are provided with a

structured therapeutic environment are better able to develop self esteem and build and maintain relationships.

VII. Conclusions

Project Inclusion targeted teens ranging in age from 13 to 18 years old and their families formed through adoption, foster care, and or kinship care in the Greater Boston Area. Project Inclusion was an empowerment program aimed at increasing self-esteem by strengthening identity and relationships in youth who have been raised in adoption, foster care, or kinship care. This aim was reached through two different Programs: the Zine Group and Play With Reality. The Zine Group and Play with Reality Theater Group facilitated teens' self-exploration with support from group mentors (GROUPMentorZ & JuniorMentZ) within the context of expressive therapy groups. In the Zine Group participants attend Zine Making Sessions in which teens and GROUPMentorZ create a magazine (Zine) that captures who they are. In the Play With Reality Theater Group participants attend Theater Skills Training Sessions in which teens and GROUPMentorZ create and execute a theatrical performance that speaks to their collective experience of adoption. During both the Zine Group and Play With Reality, teens reflected on others' perspectives as they further defined their identities. While the Project was open to all teens fitting the target demographic, regardless of skill, experience or interest in the arts, the nature of the Project seemed to lend itself to attracting teens with previous experience with or a profound attraction to the arts.

Benefits and difficulties. Project Inclusion was designed to enhance the self esteem and relationships of teenagers raised in adoption, foster care or kinship care through the expressive medium of magazine making and theatrical performance. The project responded to a tremendous *need* for helping foster and adoptive teens maintain connections with the important adults in their lives while developing an understanding of who they are in relation to the important people in their lives and independent of them. Project Inclusion is one of the *only programs* in the nation dedicated to developing and advancing practices that promote relationship building, and the maintaining of connections for adopted teens. The project served as a *laboratory to test, refine, streamline and disseminate strategies* for restoring and maintaining teen connections and self-esteem. Through a strong evaluation component, CFFC has learn what works for this population, and has made that information available to others.

The program itself requires significant commitment, time, and energy from both families and clinicians. The program, as implemented under the auspices of an Adoption Opportunities grant, revealed the many benefits and some difficulties in developing a clinical model of expressive group treatment that targeted self esteem and relationship development. The Zines and Zine groups as well as the theatrical performance and PWR group were a powerful tool to help youth define who they are, and what they stand for, and to support their ability to convey that identity in a constructive way to others. Project inclusion addressed issues of identity, trust, rejection, inclusion, mastery, and relationship.

Limitations of evaluation instruments. Implementation of this project has been thoughtful, thorough, and responsive to ongoing and new challenges. After measures were used during the first two Zine groups, Project staff and evaluators discussed challenges and solutions. A key challenge was the time-intensive nature of reading the questionnaire and reporting, especially for children with learning disabilities. Two strategies were employed to address this challenge. First, measurement points were reduced to two: before the first Zine session and after the last

Zine session. Participants in Play with Reality completed measures twice: before the first PWR session and after the last PWR session. Second, when indicated, Project staff read measures to/with youth in order to minimize fatigue in reading and facilitate response.

Rating of videotapes of Zine sessions and Play with Reality sessions proved to be more labor intensive and time consuming than initially projected.

Barriers and facilitators. Barriers and facilitators to enacting the model can also be found data noted above. Barriers include a scheduling conflicts and age-appropriate resistance of adolescents to structure and schedules.

Facilitators for enacting the model included parents who already had a history with the agency had an already-established trusting relationship with the agency that was the foundation for their appreciation of the program.

VIII. Implications and Recommendations

The Project Inclusion model has undergone minor changes throughout the grant implementation period. Two key components of the model were the Zine Group and the Play With Reality Group. An additional key aspect common to each of these components was that of the JAM Session. The purpose of both of these components was to strengthen self-esteem and enhance relationships while exploring ones identity. Interested teens and their parents attended a Pre-JAM Session meeting after having a phone intake. The Pre-JAM session was an extension of the intake aimed at preparing the teen and his/her parent to participate in a JAM Sessions well as inform them about the Zine or PWR groups. Ideally, teens then went on to have a JAM Session prior to the start of the group. This event was voluntary and some teens chose not to participate. The JAM Session helped teens ascertain a sense of them selves through the eyes of important people in their lives. The JAM Session set the tone for self-exploration in the Zine or PWR Groups. Following the completion of the JAM Sessions, teens engaged in either PWR or the Zine group (teens chose). These groups used expressive mediums of collage, poetry, writing, drawing, painting were used in the Zine Group as well as theater/drama skills in PWR to help teens explore their identity as well as develop and explore relationships with others.

Challenges for Implementing the Model

- Competing with very busy schedules of today's teen made it difficult to find a time that fit most teens needs.
- Scheduling the various JAM Sessions required extensive collateral time on the phone. This time increased exponentially as the number of guests invited increased, i.e., parents, therapists, teachers, friends, co-workers, coaches, etc.
- Caution of parents not previously connected to the Center resulted in extra time spent gaining their trust and commitment on behalf of their child.
- Normative adolescent resistance to participating in a therapy group.

Clinical Aspects of the Model

The clinical aspect of the model lay in the limits, boundaries, and structure of the groups as well as the attention the clinicians gave to the emotional state of the children during the various event of the Project. The clinicians did whatever possible to create a safe space where the teens could interact in a way that would deepen their sense of self-esteem and enhance their capacity to build relationships.

There were no particular requirements for teens to participate in the program except a genuine commitment on the part of the adults to support the teen through the process and a willingness on the teens part “to give it a try.” There has been some attrition of teens from the Project for various reasons. Overall, the level of attrition is within the norms of group development.

Flexibility within the model

There was flexibility with the scheduling of the events (information Session, Pre-JAM Session, JAM Session, Groups, Exhibit/Production, Backstage Party/Cast Party). In some cases JAM Sessions ensued after the start of the Group Sessions. Such flexibility in the model allowed the Project to contain some of the teens’ anxiety and ambivalence about having a JAM Session. This flexibility varied across groups as some teens were undecided about holding a JAM Session and needed time to think it through.

Best practices

The Project Inclusion model brings together expressive group therapy and adoption-sensitive treatment and embodies elements of the best practice guidelines from both. There was an established timeline for groups, and a clear procedure for the structure of the Project events from beginning to end. Flexibility within this structure varied depending on the needs of the particular Group members. While teens were invited back to participate as JuniorMentZ, there was no specific criteria that qualified one as a JuniorMent. It may have been advantageous for JuniorMentZ to have more involved training and preparation as well criteria that set them apart from other teens in an empowering fashion. This aspect of the Project could be further developed to more strongly enhance teen empowerment.

The clinicians involved in the Project embodied the qualities that may be described as crucial for group development. They juggled and multi-tasked, while always keeping their clinical eye on the needs of each child. Their sensitivity to the emotional as well as the physical environment of the group promoted safety and sharing that might not otherwise have happened.

Child welfare practice has changed dramatically in the last half century. The practice of open adoption has replaced more archaic and secretive adoption practices. However, there remains a lack of Clinical services in support of adoptive families, especially after adoption. As families move through the life cycle, the adolescent years can be a particularly challenging time for youth. Thus they are more likely to struggle with identity confusion and being in relationship to others as they negotiate the task of individuation and separation. The Project Inclusion program offers child welfare professionals a model for maintaining, supporting, and enriching relationships and positive identity development for teens, (and all of their families) raised in adoption, foster care, kinship care or other complex family construction.