

ROCK FAMILIES FIRST

Keeping Rock County families safely together



Rock County

*We are the movement.
Our people are amazing, beautiful,
full of resilience,
full of spirit
and creating change.*

But we need the system to change.



Rock County parents and Rock County Human Services Department co-design an actionable plan to keep families safely together

Creating new
solutions
with families
to reach our
big vision



**USE A DATA-
DRIVEN APPROACH
IN CHILD
PROTECTIVE
SERVICES**

**SAFELY REDUCE
THE NUMBER OF
CHILDREN
REMOVED FROM
THEIR FAMILIES**

**ENGAGE WITH
FAMILIES WITH
INCREASED
SATISFACTION**

Rock Families First Goals

In response to the 2018 federally legislated Family First Prevention Services Act, Rock Families First uses data-driven approaches to design solutions that reduce government's over-involvement in families.

A Community Cultivator hired by Alia leads the effort of engaging impacted parents in Rock County (a group now self-described as the "BeeHive") to co-create ways of addressing the three project goals. The ultimate vision is to promote family stability and wellbeing.

Alia advances Rock Families First by convening and supporting project partners: system leaders, design facilitator, community members, and funders. **Internal capacity building and community co-design work in Rock County since 2018 has led to an overall decrease in the number of youth in care by almost 60% and the use of residential care by 87%.**

After two years of system readiness and community mobilizing, a design sprint in October 2022 resulted in the *IDEA BOOK: A New Future for Families – A call to action for Rock County systems change, created in partnership with parents in Rock County.*

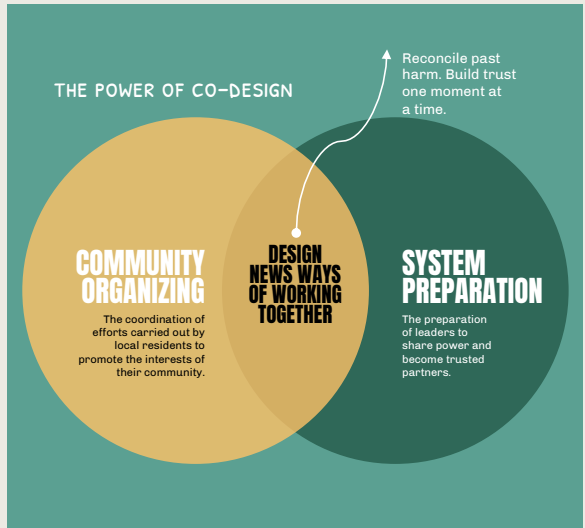
System preparation + community organizing

Rock Families First is a movement powered by trust; therefore trust-building is the project's top priority for all involved. System leaders and workers spend time in preparation, creating readiness to receive (not just hear) the experiences of impacted parents.

The reconciliation and trust-building process was set in motion early on by a powerful apology statement made by the HSD Director.

“I want to acknowledge that in our work through Child Protective Services we have failed at times to live up to our mission which means that we have failed you, your families, and your children. On behalf of the Human Services Department and our current staff and behalf of those who served in these roles in the past, I want to say I am sorry.”

– Kate Luster, Rock County Human Services Director

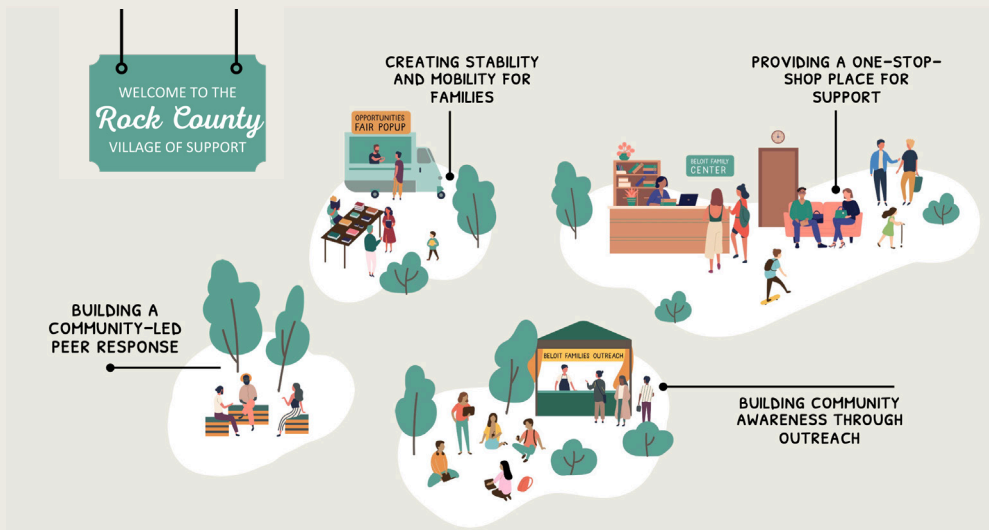


Feeling seen and supported, parents can speak to their experiences, needs, and desires. This shapes the vision of how to ensure families have access to what they need to succeed.

“As parents we get asked all the time to give our advice or to sit on an advisory board. Usually, we get a gift card and are sent on our way. Co-design was different. Everyone was nervous and really didn’t know what to expect. Co-design brought parents negatively impacted by the system together with the system. We were seen. We were heard. There was even an apology for past wrongs. What we said was used to create a plan for a new way! This was something that we never expected. Openness and vulnerability displayed by all allowed room for relationship building and trust. Now we are being engaged as leaders to help the very system that did us wrong.”

– LaMikka James, Community Cultivator and Rock County parent

Four Areas of the “Village of Support”



What’s next?

Co-designed ideas are turning into co-designed action in each of the four solution areas. Collaboration with impacted parents is becoming the new way for planning and taking action across the Rock County Human Services Department.

As trust grows and collaboration deepens, vulnerabilities remain. With much yet to be done, making deep investments in continued trust, building clear structures, raising accountability for Rock Families First practice, and ever-expanding community engagement, success becomes more and more inevitable.

In the end, the strength of the community (represented in the BeeHive) endures!



Scan to read the Idea Book Summary

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