

# **Vision for** Creating a better future for children, **CHILDREN**<sup>th</sup><sub>sk</sub> where geography does not determine their future.

# THEORY OF CHANGE

Children thrive in communities that value and support their well-being, and where geography does not determine their future.

Desired Long-Term Change

Goal

# **Equitable Society**

### **Connected Communities**

**INDICATORS OF PROGRESS** 

# Strong & Stable Families

#### **INDICATORS OF PROGRESS**

- Federal, state, and local laws and policies acknowledge racial inequity and seek to redress it.
- Families can meet basic needs through a combination of living wages and work supports (e.g. Earned income tax credit, SNAP, subsidized childcare).

• The community has opportunities to access affordable, healthy food, affordable and decent housing, quality mental and physical

health care, gainful employment, transportation and early care and education.

- Neighborhoods are stable and safe.
- Communities encourage active parent/caregiver participation in activities and decision-making.
- Linkages to concrete supports and quality services are available when needed.
- The community has culturally competent services and supports.

#### **INDICATORS OF PROGRESS**

- Parents/caregivers have healthy interpersonal relationships.
- Parents/caregivers model nurturing behaviors and positive communication.
- Parents/caregivers are socially connected and resilient.
- Parents understand child development.
- Families are empowered to make decisions about their own families.
- Families recognize and embrace their role as active community/civic participants.

# Our

Strategies

Work alongside families to develop lasting connections, learn from their lived experience, collect qualitative data, and connect families to services.

Spur the growth and development of community leaders and advocates through trainings, engagement, and opportunities for action.

Identify children at risk through developmental screenings and connect families to resources.

Engage and strengthen current strategic partnerships based on the prioritized needs of the community, as determined by quantitative and qualitative (community voice) data.

Strengthen collaborative efforts by building regional expertise, developing collaborative action steps, and utilizing the strengths of stakeholders.

Improve coordination and collaboration across family and child serving systems and encourage a collective voice for children's well-being.

#### Collect, analyze, and share

quantitative data within the St. Louis region that focuses on indicators predictive of or correlated with child well-being.

Collect, analyze, and share qualitative data that focus on child well-being issues raised through community voice.

Identify and respond to data gaps and needs in the St. Louis region.

Research and share best practices, policy recommendations, and evidence-based solutions.

**Enhance VCR's digital interface** with the community and families. Adopt a policy framework to guide VCR's advocacy work.

Equip strategic influencers to elevate the advocacy messaging consistent with the policy framework.

Raise the voice of families and communities through grassroots advocacy.

Align VCR with other strategic partners' advocacy efforts, especially at a state level.

**Our Focus** 

**ENGAGING** 

**COLLABORATING** 

INFORMING



#### Assumptions

#### Our theory of change is based on these assumptions:

- Racial and economic inequities exist that adversely impact the well-being of children;
- Family and community voice are critical in creating meaningful change;
- Families and communities must be included as leaders in the (re)creation and implementation of the systems, policies, and practices that impact their lives;
- Child well-being cannot be separated from family well-being; and
- Movement toward child well-being requires macro level policy change as well as micro level change in individual lives.

Current Conditions More than half a million children reside in the 5 core counties of the St. Louis Region (St. Louis City, St. Louis and St. Charles counties in Missouri, and St. Clair and Madison counties in Illinois). These children are the future residents, workers, and leaders of St. Louis. Data from the Children of Metropolitan St. Louis Data Book paint a grim picture. Indicators associated with child well-being show that an alarming 1 out of every 3 children is significantly at risk based on the zip code in which they reside. Black children are much more likely to live in zip codes with a severe risk ranking. Ninety-five (95) percent of the zip codes where a majority of the population is Black have a severe risk ranking.

Vision for Children at Risk believes that systemic change is necessary, and that it takes: engaging families and communties, strong collaborative efforts, informing and equipping the region through data and best practices, and advocating for a better future.