

## 7. ELCAA: Key Informants: Finding and Enlisting

Key informants are individuals with a window into young families in your community, either through their professional role or their personal connections. Look back at the community map that you prepared in the first activity we did today for inspiration.

Community service providers are often key informants. Look for the leader or expert staff members in organizations such as:

Intervention agencies	Health care organizations
WIC; Children with Special Needs	Pediatrician offices
Educational organizations	Hospitals
Head Start	Family and free clinics
Pre-school programs, nurseries, daycare	Other organizations
School districts	4-H, YMCA, Boys and Girls, Scout Troops
Colleges with education program	Faith based groups
Universities with LIS programs	Cultural, language based groups or clubs

Gatekeepers are often sources of information. These are individuals who know a lot about the community without being in formal leadership roles. Working with a gatekeeper can be invaluable particularly within a cultural or ethnic community. Find these individuals by asking questions about community leaders and listening for names that come up over and over. Also look to your library staff, particularly part time students and staff. Ask families with young children who are regular library users about who they respect or go to for advice about various life issues.

Once key informants have been identified, contact them to ask if they would be willing help you. Explain that the library is retooling its early literacy services and starting with getting to know the community and its resources better. Acknowledge that they have a unique view into the lives of young children and families in your community. [*They may not know what 'community asset analysis' is, particularly those whose cultural, racial backgrounds are not like ours, or they are recent immigrants*].

Ask if they would participate in a focus group, or if you can interview them. Provide a time frame so that the person understands how much of a commitment is being asked. For organizations that you think might be a likely partner, try to interview the person in person in charge to gauge the prospects for partnership and begin the relationship. Prepare information about the library's early literacy services to take to the interviews.