

Executive Director

Mary Hafner: A very big decision for us was about transportation in our program. This center had four buses, 19 bus runs a day. And it was several years ago, budget money was tight, and there wasn't any one-time funds for – to purchase buses, which is what we had done in the past. And we had a fleet of like 17 buses throughout the county. So, in our management meetings, of course our CFO is part of it, and we had talked about the cost of maintenance on these vehicles because they were aging out, and what it was costing the program and what were we going to do. And one of the things we looked at was our community here and the families that we serve in this small city and what were the probability that – that they could get their own transportation and get here.

So we – we looked at families data and we had the fiscal data, and we took it to Policy Council and we took it to the board, and they both approved that we could eliminate transportation here in our Glens Fall Center. That was risky because we weren't sure how it was going to impact the program. And that was the last thing we wanted to do, but we also didn't want to serve less children, and if – that could happen if we didn't have buses on the road.

So the outcome, after a lot of nervous moments of how it was going to be, was that our parent involvement skyrocketed in our program. Parents brought their children in in the morning, they stayed, they came and had lunch, or they came later in the day and read a story to the children, or they were just helpful hands to the classroom. And we probably doubled our parent involvement because they were bringing their children in. It also gave family workers a chance to have a conversation with parents about any of the challenges they were facing and – and where – what could they do to help. So, it had some wonderful side benefits. It was based on data. It was – it felt risky at the time, but it was a great decision.