New tools for Strengthening Families

Resources to support your implementation of the Protective Factors Framework

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What we’ll cover today

• Brief overview of Strengthening Families
• New resources from CSSP
  – Reinforcement of the research base
  – Stronger definitions of the protective factors
  – New and revised tools
  – Guidance for implementation at multiple levels

Introductions

• Name
• Organization/agency
• Any experience with Strengthening Families

An approach – not a model, a program or a curriculum
• Research-based and evidence-informed
• Designed to promote optimal development and stronger families – and prevent child maltreatment
• A universal approach that benefits ALL families
• Being applied in many fields that touch the lives of children and families
Not your ordinary initiative

- Implementing SF is about:
  - small but significant changes in everyday practice
  - the shifts in policies and systems that allow/promote those changes in practice
- Implementation funds come from existing dollars
- All national implementation tools are available free of charge

Big Idea #1: A Protective/Promotive Factors Approach

- Protective Factors: conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk
- Promotive Factors: conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that actively enhance well-being

What we know: Families gain what they need to be successful when key protective factors are robust in their lives and communities
Promoting Child Well-Being by Strengthening Families

Big Idea #2: An approach, not a model

- Applied in any setting that serves young children and their families
- Implemented through small but significant changes
- Cross-sector implementation as core to the approach
- Not parallel to, but integrated into existing practice

Big Idea #3: A changed relationship with parents

- Supporting parents’ ability to parent effectively
- Involving parents as partners in achieving good outcomes for children
- Engaging parents effectively through programs
- Partnering with parents to help design systems and policies that work for children and families
- Engaging parents directly in mutually supportive relationships that build protective factors

Five Protective Factors

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Which brings us to... new tools!

- CSSP is in the process of updating the 2002 literature review that informed the development of the Protective Factors Framework
  - Incorporating new findings about brain development and the effects of trauma
  - More concrete definition of each protective factor and how it may look in families
**Parental resilience**  
Managing stress and functioning well even when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma.

**What it looks like**  
**Resilience to general life stress**  
- Hope, optimism, self-confidence  
- Problem solving skills  
- Self care and willingness to ask for help  
- Ability to manage negative emotions  
**Resilience to parenting stress**  
- Not allowing stress to interfere with nurturing  
- Positive attitude about parenting and child  

**Everyday Actions**  
- Demonstrate in multiple ways that parents are valued  
- Honor each family’s race, language, culture, history and approach to parenting  
- Provide empathetic support that encourages pro-active responses to managing stress  
- Support parents as decision-makers and help build decision-making and leadership skills  
- Help parents understand how to buffer their child during stressful times  

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**Social connections**  
Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support.

**What it looks like**  
- Multiple friendships and supportive relationships with others  
- Feeling respected and appreciated  
- Accepting help from others, and giving help to others  
- Skills for establishing and maintaining connections  

**Everyday Actions**  
- Help families value, build, sustain and use social connections  
- Create an inclusive environment  
- Facilitate mutual support around parenting and other issues  
- Promote engagement in the community and participation in community activities
Knowledge of parenting & child dev’t
Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development.

What it looks like
- Nurturing parenting behavior
- Appropriate developmental expectations
- Ability to create a developmentally supportive environment for child
- Positive discipline techniques; ability to effectively manage child behavior
- Recognizing and responding to your child’s specific needs

Everyday Actions
- Model developmentally appropriate interactions with children
- Provide information and resources on parenting and child development
- Encourage exploration of parenting issues or concerns
- Provide opportunities to try out new parenting strategies
- Address parenting issues from a strength-based perspective

Concrete support in times of need
Access to concrete support and services that address a family’s needs and helps minimize stress caused by challenges.

What it looks like
- Seeking and receiving support when needed
- Knowing what services are available and how to access them
- Adequate financial security; basic needs being met
- Persistence
- Advocating effectively for self and child to receive necessary help

Everyday Actions
- Respond immediately when families are in crisis
- Provide information and connections to other services in the community
- Help families to develop skills and tools they need to identify their needs and connect to supports

Social and emotional competence of children
Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions, and establish and maintain relationships.

What it looks like
For the parent:
- Warm and consistent responses that foster a strong and secure attachment with the child
- Encouraging and reinforcing social skills; setting limits
For the child:
- Age-appropriate self-regulation
- Ability to form and maintain relationship with others
- Positive interactions with others
- Effective communication

Everyday Actions
- Help parents foster their child’s social emotional development
- Model nurturing support to children
- Include children’s social and emotional development activities in programming
- Help children develop a positive cultural identity and interact in a diverse society
- Respond proactively when social or emotional development seems to need support

Additional slides for specific groups
- We have slides that describe what we might see related to each protective factor in families involved in CPS, or in families touched by domestic violence – and what the worker’s role is related to that protective factor
- Designed for use in orienting/training workers in those specific fields
The program self-assessment

- The most important tools in helping programs identify their strengths and areas where they could improve
- Needed updating:
  - Enhance content on honoring families' cultural and linguistic heritage
  - Further emphasize parent leadership
  - More closely align with national standards for early care and education

Major changes

- Organizing structure: Protective factors and everyday actions (not program strategies)
- Field-specific:
  - Center-based early care and education
  - Family child care
  - Home visiting
  - Child welfare
  - Family support
- For the center-based ECE self-assessment, items will be tiered to support use in QRIS

Field testing the self-assessments

- Testing the self-assessments, one field at a time
  - Home visiting already done
  - Early care and education coming up soon
  - Family child care, child welfare, family support later this spring
- Contact Anna Lovejoy: alovejoy@gmail.com if you'd like to participate
- Final tools ready by October 2014

Guidance for implementation

- Core functions of Strengthening Families implementation:
  - Building an infrastructure to advance and sustain the work
  - Building parent partnerships
  - Deepening knowledge and understanding
  - Shifting practice, policy and systems toward a protective factors approach
  - Ensuring accountability
The core functions are carried out in different ways at different levels...

- Program
- Agency or system
- State or jurisdiction
- National
Small group work

- Group by your level of implementation
- Read through the bullet points from the “Core Functions” grid together
- Discuss:
  - Does this describe what you do to implement Strengthening Families?
  - Are there things you haven’t been doing that you could add?
  - What tools and resources would help you to carry out more of these functions?

Report back and next steps

- Any “a-ha” moments or insights to share from your small group work?
- Other tools or resources you could use in your work?
- Questions about the new tools?

Thank you

- [www.strengtheningfamilies.net](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net)
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