



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES CALIFORNIA: STATE PROFILE

Infrastructure

California began its Strengthening Families efforts in 2007. Partners include the California Department of Social Services, Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP), Strategies (a statewide capacity-building network funded by OCAP), the California Department of Public Health, Maternal Child & Adolescent Health Division, First 5 county commissions, the Department of Education, Early Education and Support Division, the Child Welfare Council, Child Welfare Director's Association, Child Care Resource and Referral Network, California Network of Family Strengthening Networks, Parents Anonymous, Parent Services Project, Family Resource Network of California and various county representatives. More than 40 of California's 58 counties have been involved in some form of training or technical assistance projects to integrate the Strengthening Families framework into local services.

In September 2010, state leaders formed the California Strengthening Families Roundtable to promote statewide efforts and provide communication and cross-sector learning between the governance levels. Nine Roundtables have been conducted since its inception. The Roundtable meets three times a year. More than 160 leaders from throughout the state have attended at least one Roundtable. In 2013 the Roundtable established priorities for its Steering Committee, Work Groups and Learning Community to advance the goal of integrating the protective factors in child and family serving systems.

Parent Partnerships

The Roundtable is committed to demonstrating the impact of meaningful parent engagement. Through membership on the Roundtable Steering Committee, attendance at the Roundtable Learning Community, and participation in the three work groups (Data and Evaluation; Policy; and Communication), organizations such as Parent Services Project, Parent Voices, Parents Anonymous® Inc. and Parents with Purpose are working to promote the Strengthening Families framework throughout the state. Through a three-year grant from OCAP, Parent Services Project developed parent leadership academies Leaders for Change and provides leadership training featuring the protective factors in six counties per year. OCAP has also funded Parents Anonymous to continue the State Parent Leadership Team, which empowers parents with former child welfare involvement to become active agents of change in decision-making capacities regarding the shaping/revision of policies, programs and practices at the state and local levels. While efforts vary from county to county, a number of communities and Child Abuse Prevention Councils across California are using a parent café model to engage parents in the Strengthening Families framework. Finally, the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant includes parent engagement as a Core Competency for the state Quality Rating Improvement System.

Strengthening Families

Strengthening Families™ is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs and communities in building 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

Using the Strengthening Families framework, more than 30 states are shifting policy and practice to help programs working with children and families focus on protective factors. States apply the Strengthening Families approach in early childhood, child welfare, child abuse prevention and other child and family serving systems.

Nationally, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) coordinates Strengthening Families and works with more than a dozen national partner organizations to create a new vision in which communities, families, institutions, service systems and organizations:

- Focus on protective and promotive factors
- Recognize and support parents as decision-makers and leaders
- Value the culture and unique assets of each family
- Are mutually responsible for better outcomes for children, youth and families

For more information, visit www.strengtheningfamilies.net.



Implementation Checklist

Protective Factors used in Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems or other early childhood systems planning	✓
Protective Factors used in Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention RFP Process	✓
Protective Factors integrated into state Quality Rating and Improvement System	✓
Child Care Resource & Referral Network in state supporting program implementation	✓
Strengthening Families included in State Home Visiting Plan	✓
Strengthening Families is being implemented into child welfare system	✓

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Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

In 2013, Strategies provided approximately 50 trainings and workshops specifically focused on the Strengthening Families approach, attended by over 1,100 participants. Another 1,000 people attended additional trainings that incorporated the Strengthening Families approach, including standards certification training developed by the California Network of Family Strengthening Networks. Other professional development opportunities have been provided by county First 5 Commissions. Many California organizations have utilized the online training provided by the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds.

Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

In October 2013 OCAP and Strategies presented a statewide Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Summit focused on the Power of Community. Over three hundred participants from throughout California attended. Parent scholarships were provided to encourage caregiver attendance. The Strengthening Families framework was included in the Summit topics, and participants engaged in a community café. Some 40 of California’s 58 counties are promoting adoption of this approach. In Los Angeles (LA), the Children’s Bureau/Magnolia Place conducts an innovative community collaboration focused on improving outcomes for the 23,000 children living in the area, using the protective factors as a frame for developing strategies and measuring outcomes. Strategies provides technical assistance and training across the state to support implementation.

OCAP has integrated the Protective Factors Framework into its statewide programs and grants. The Department of Public Health is funding 21 home visiting sites that infuse the approach throughout their work and reporting requirements. Working with the Department of Public Health, Strategies

customized a training on the Protective Factors that was attended by the 21 federally funded home visiting programs. After the training, the sites received technical assistance that was aimed at identifying concrete plans to integrate the Protective Factors into their services with families. The Department of Education has embedded The Strengthening Families Framework into its Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) core standard for family engagement for the 17 Regional Leadership Consortia in 16 counties that are implementing the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants. This will infuse the Strengthening Families approach into programs serving almost 1.9 million children under the age of 5.

Ensuring Accountability

Strengthening Families evaluation practices are emerging across California. In 2013, 26 agencies across California completed the Strengthening Families program self-assessment. Twenty California counties with family resource centers use the Family Development Matrix, which is aligned with the five protective factors. This allows measurement of improved outcomes for Child Welfare Differential Response referrals and other at-risk families served. Using a collaborative design, each agency network shares outcome indicators between Family Resource Centers, Child Welfare agencies and other community organizations.

Evolving Work

California’s Strengthening Families Roundtable will continue to implement its mission to infuse the Strengthening Families framework into practices and systems for children, families and communities throughout the state of California.

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