

## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES ALABAMA STATE PROFILE

### Infrastructure

The Alabama Partnership for Children (APC), a statewide non-profit organization, and the Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention (ADCANP)/the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) are co-leads in implementing Strengthening Families in the state. Together they have continued to implement Strengthening Families in many state systems and programs. Key partners include but are not limited to: Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers (ANFRC) and their cadre of certified trainers, Alabama Department of Human Resources, Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education and Alabama Department of Mental Health.

### Parent Partnerships

ADCANP funds the APC's Parent Leadership initiative and has most recently engaged with the Children's Trust Fund Alliance to create a Parent Advisory Council to advise the work of the state agency.

The Alabama Parent Leadership Network (APLN) was established in 2015. Parents that have completed a leadership curriculum become members. Members are given opportunities to serve in their local communities, and are engaged in state and national partnerships through serving on boards and promoting Family Engagement among partners for APC and CTF. Strengthening Families is becoming recognized across the state as the leading parent engagement framework.

We have a parent representative on the FRIENDS Parent Advisory Board. Members are also serving key positions on the National Early Childhood Family Network as founding members of the group initiated by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

### Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

ADCANP and APC realized years ago the importance of bringing the Strengthening Families Initiative to the state. Together, they have promoted the framework in all of their programs. APC provided training to all partners across the state, and continues to partner with ADCANP and ANFRC in training for many systems and programs.

ADCANP is partnering with the ANFRC in the production of day-long virtual training modules designed for mental health workers in the state and other community partners. These modules were extended into the current year and have proved very successful community training tools.

In addition, ADCANP and ANFRC are partnering to provide a three-day virtual training to all state Department of Human Resources' supervisors and frontline workers who engage in child protective services.

### 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 and federal partners 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

## Implementation Checklist

Strengthening Families is used in state or local early childhood systems planning efforts	✓
Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) efforts include a focus on protective factors	✓
Strengthening Families is integrated in a Quality Rating and Improvement System for early care and education	
Strengthening Families is included in the state's Home Visiting Plan	✓
Strengthening Families is being implemented in the child welfare system	✓
Strengthening Families efforts are linked to work to advance equity, anti-racism, and social justice	✓
The state's work around Adverse Childhood Experiences includes a focus on protective factors and positive childhood experiences	✓

### Learn More

[www.ctf.alabama.gov](http://www.ctf.alabama.gov)

<https://alabamapartnershipforchildren.org/>

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APC has created and published a comprehensive curriculum (with guidebooks for mentors and parent participants) to promote parent leadership and parent engagement through the APLN and many partner agencies. The APC website also has a dedicated resource page on Strengthening Families and a Facebook page dedicated to parents on protective factors and family strengths. This partnership has brought a unique understanding of the importance that all families in Alabama would benefit from this framework.

## Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

ADCANP and APC have engaged in training the protective factors with the Alabama Departments of Mental Health, Human Resources, Public Health and Early Childhood Education. We have also worked to provide training to various programs of Home Visitation, Children's Policy Councils and Foster Care. The Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education uses the online training of Protective Factors as a required teacher professional development tool in all of the First Class Pre-K classrooms. We are actively encouraging state systems to adopt Strengthening Families as a professional development tool.

ADCANP and ANFRC are actively engaged in the virtual training format, including the protective factors approach and collaborating with the Alabama Departments of Mental Health and Human Resources. Future collaboration in the training modules includes mental health coordinators embedded within school systems throughout the state.

APLN members have been involved in Legislative days. There have also been representatives on a national level with initiatives such as Zero to Three's "Strolling Thunder at the Nation's Capitol." The impact of this work has resulted in several opportunities for agencies and systems to use members in surveys and research as a "parent voice" of parents in Alabama.

## Ensuring Accountability

Training evaluations are a part of all virtual training events. In addition, the protective factors form the basis of the retrospective survey approach utilized by ADCANP evaluation partner – Auburn University's College of Human Sciences.

## Evolving Work

ADCANP, ANFRC and APC will continue to expand the number and outreach of Strengthening Families Certified Trainers to embed the Strengthening Families approach in communities in Alabama. Partnerships will continue with mental health practitioners, school

personnel, child welfare workers, juvenile justice personnel, child care centers, and other community professionals working to ensure families are strengthened and children are thriving in Alabama.

The APLN continues to grow. It is quickly becoming recognized as an important group for families across the state. It has several members that are founding members of the ADCANP Policy Council. It is valuable for our state to have parents that represent all families regardless of race, religion, education status, etc. Strengthening Families empowers parents with the tools they need to work towards addressing any problems that arise for their families.