



### STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Strengthening Families is a research-informed, cost-effective strategy to increase family stability, enhance child development and reduce child abuse and neglect. It builds 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

Through the Strengthening Families Initiative, more than thirty states are shifting policy, funding and training to help programs working with children and families build protective factors with families. Many states also use the Strengthening Families approach to inform state prevention strategies, strengthen families in the child welfare system and engage parents and communities in building protective factors.

### WHY NURTURING PARENTING PROGRAMS AND STATE STRENGTHENING FAMILIES™ EFFORTS SHOULD CONNECT

Strengthening Families efforts provide a cross-systems framework for family support and capacity building in more than 30 states. State initiatives are led by cross-system leadership teams generally representing a diverse set of disciplines, including early childhood, child abuse and neglect prevention, child welfare and public health. In most states, Strengthening Families is being implemented broadly in settings as diverse as early childhood centers, family support programs, parenting programs and other venues that serve young children and their families. Connecting to these leadership teams provides an opportunity to place the *Nurturing Parenting Programs* work in the context of broad cross-disciplinary thinking about how to leverage existing systems to support families and prevent abuse and neglect.

At the programmatic level Strengthening Families provides a framework and set of tools to help any environment that supports young children and their families enhance their capacity to build protective factors that promote optimal development and prevent abuse and neglect. For sites implementing the *Nurturing Parenting Programs*, Strengthening Families materials and tools can be used to help build a more comprehensive family support strategy that will complement their existing work. Existing programs implementing the Strengthening Families approach in states may also be an important resource for the *Nurturing Parenting Programs* sites to refer families to. These programs are already working with families in a strengths-based, capacity building way and may be an important resource to families who need additional supports as they navigate the stress of early infant crying.

Visit the Strengthening Families website ([www.strengtheningfamilies.net](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net)) to learn more about efforts going on in specific states, or to download tools and resources to support Strengthening Families implementation within a program.



Nurturing Parenting Programs (NPP) is a set of evidence-based curricula for prevention, intervention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. In 25 variations, the program uses a strength-based, research-derived approach to meet the needs of a variety of audiences.

The lessons of NPP, delivered through group classes and/or home visits, promote strategies and techniques for parents and children to develop and increase:

1. Positive self-concept, self-esteem and self-worth
2. Empathy and emotional regulation
3. Use of non-violent discipline
4. Awareness of self, beliefs, family cultural practices and appropriate family roles
5. Healthy sense of empowerment
6. Positive interactions among family members

The Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2) was designed in tandem with NPP and is used to assess participant outcomes from the program. More than two dozen evaluations of NPP have been published since 1983.

To learn more about the Nurturing Parenting Programs, visit [www.nurturingparenting.com](http://www.nurturingparenting.com).

### HOW NURTURING PARENTING PROGRAMS LINK TO THE STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

The Nurturing Parenting Programs (NPP) are strength-based and designed to help families replace negative patterns with new, positive, nurturing patterns. The philosophy and approach of NPP align well with the Strengthening Families mission and protective factors.<sup>1</sup>

**Parental Resilience:** NPP builds resilience by helping parents develop a positive self-concept and respond with empathy to their children as well as to themselves. Anger management, stress management and emotional regulation are emphasized. In addition, parents are encouraged in each lesson to consider the impact of their own childhood experiences on their current thoughts and behaviors.

**Social Connections:** Through group-based sessions that are often tailored to families in a specific cultural group and/or geographic area, and by encouraging parents to involve family members and significant others in home-based services, NPP promotes the development and strengthening of social connections. The bond between parent and NPP facilitator also serves to model what a healthy, collaborative, nurturing relationship looks like. Parents can apply that in their parenting as well as in their family, friendship and romantic relationships.

**Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** Building knowledge of parenting and child development is a primary focus of NPP. The parenting content in NPP emphasizes the importance of cooperative, empathic relationships with children and “discipline with dignity.” Programs structured around the age of the child allow for the delivery of relevant information on brain development, ages and stages and other child and youth development topics. The goal is to develop appropriate expectations among parents.

**Concrete Support in Times of Need:** NPP uses a wraparound approach to ensure that families are getting the support they need, particularly when referred to the program by social services. The Nurturing Skills Competency Scale is used to identify needed concrete supports in six areas.

**Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** Children participate in activities that parallel what their parents are learning in their own NPP sessions, run by trained facilitators. A focus is on how to use “personal power” in a positive way. Children learn age-appropriate emotional regulation and relationship skills.

<sup>1</sup>Bavolek, S.J., & Rogers, M.S. (2012). The Nurturing Parenting Programs and the Six Protective Factors. Park City, UT: Family Development Resources.