



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES MISSOURI: STATE PROFILE

Infrastructure

Missouri was one of the seven original Strengthening Families™ pilot states selected by the Center for the Study of Social Policy in 2005. The key focus thus far in Missouri's Strengthening Families effort has been in early childhood with the Department of Social Services (DSS) Children's Division as the lead agency. Other key partners include the Parent's As Teachers National Center, the Missouri Children's Trust Fund (CTF) and the Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network, known as Child Care Aware® of Missouri. The Missouri Prevention Partners, a twenty-agency consortium organized to prevent child abuse, agreed to serve as Missouri's Strengthening Families Advisory Team.

Since 2005, much has been accomplished in the work to embed the Strengthening Families protective factors into funding and training opportunities supported by DSS Children's Division and the CTF. The protective factors have been incorporated into the core competencies for early care and education professionals and the ECCS state plan. CTF continues to promote Strengthening Families through both public and professional education messaging. Additionally, a Strengthening Families Protective Factors rack card will be made available to all service providers in Missouri. A Strengthening Families insert is also included in the Missouri Parents As Teachers winter newsletter (distributed to more than 2,000 PAT educators annually).

Parent Partnerships

In 2012, the ECCS held a Parent Leadership Summit focused on engaging parents in working with local community ECCS teams. Many of these teams were able to bring family leaders within their team and/or potential family leaders to the summit. Family Leaders are now represented on the state ECCS, where they participate in all meetings and stand in the committee for planning upcoming statewide parent leadership summits. The Coordinating Board for Early Childhood/Missouri Early Childhood State Advisory Council has worked with individuals on the ECCS steering team to develop a joint strategic plan that also includes improvement of family involvement.

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	✓

State Coordinator

Cindy Reese
 Department of Social Services,
 Child Care Quality
 Cindy.A.Reese@dss.mo.gov

Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

Missouri has promoted the online Strengthening Families Protective Factors training and the Department of Health and Senior Services is allowing up to twelve clock hours (two per module) to licensed care providers who complete the training.

Both the DSS Children’s Division and the CTF incorporate the Strengthening Families protective factors in their respective grant programs. Additionally, through a grant from CTF, Child Care Aware® of Missouri delivered 48 workshops using modules from the Zero to Three: Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect (PCAN) curriculum, reaching 459 individuals. An additional 74 sessions (lasting two hours each) of technical assistance were provided throughout Missouri. A total of 107 early childhood staff from 46 early care and education centers received technical assistance.

Since 2009, Missouri has continued to work to embed the Protective Factors Framework into child welfare practice and build relationships between child welfare and early childhood organizations. The University of Missouri’s Center for Family Policy and Research, Opportunities in a Professional Education Network (OPEN), holds the state’s Professional Development Registry and oversees Missouri’s Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (developed in a bi-state effort with Kansas). In 2011, these core competencies, which provide the framework for all trainings in Missouri, were revised to incorporate the protective factors. Also in 2011, all new child welfare workers received at least two hours of training on the protective factors. In addition, the Children’s Division employees contracted trainers to provide Strengthening Foster Families training throughout the state.

Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

In addition to this work, the Protective Factors Framework has also been embedded in the Missouri Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) plan. The Department of Health and Senior Services now requires all of their home visitation programs to address the protective factors.

Ensuring Accountability

CTF continues to use a standardized evaluation specific to measuring how well Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) Lead Agency model sites address the Strengthening Families protective factors in their work with at-risk families.

Evolving Work

The community-based Systems of Care teams (a Department of Mental Health initiative) continue to work on using the public health model to expand their prevention efforts. Initially supported with CBCAP funds made available through CTF, these efforts crosswalk nicely with the protective factors. Through a collaborative approach, teams survey their communities and use surveillance data to determine local gaps and strengths.

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