

# STRENGTHENING FAMILIES SOUTH CAROLINA: STATE PROFILE

## Infrastructure

Children's Trust of South Carolina is the statewide organization focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect. We provide funding, resources and training to help local program partners build strong families and positive childhoods. Children's Trust leads Strengthening Families work, and serves as the state affiliate for Prevent Child Abuse South Carolina, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT project, and also leads the South Carolina Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Initiative.

Children's Trust coordinates training related to Strengthening Families for professionals across the state and across agencies. We work with a variety of providers, programs and state agencies to educate on the Protective Factors Framework, including Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) and Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV).

## Parent Partnerships

Children's Trust has developed a framework for parent advisory councils which bring together groups of parents on a regular basis to identify actions that can better engage all parents in local communities. Using the name Parent Matters, the councils have a goal to strengthen protective factors that support children through identifying community resources and connecting parents to them. The councils also provide valuable input to area agencies and organizations on how to help parents utilize services successfully.

Members work with a Children's Trust coach to learn about ACEs, protective factors, and data informed decision-making. They work together to develop leadership skills such as storytelling, public speaking, and advocacy, which helps them be more competent and confident in their ability to create change for parents where it is needed.

## Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

Children's Trust offers workforce development to community-based partners to increase their confidence and ability to discuss the role of ACEs and Protective Factors in preventing child abuse and neglect. Additionally, Children's Trust offers conferences to build prevention knowledge and build a network of partners who prioritize prevention, including the biennial Building Hope for Children Conference. Strengthening Families messages are included in statewide messaging campaigns like Child Abuse Prevention Month.

## 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**  
[scChildren.org](http://scChildren.org)

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### Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

Developed by Children's Trust with input from existing theories, frameworks and experts in South Carolina and nationally, the Empower Action Model offers a blueprint for preventing child abuse and neglect/ ACEs, by building resilience. The model encourages the implementation of protective factors in all facets of a child's life and can be used by individuals, organizations, communities, and state leaders to develop plans of action to address childhood trauma and promote well-being.

In September 2020, South Carolina was selected as one of four jurisdictions nationwide to participate in the first tier of a cutting-edge national program that aims to move child welfare systems from traditional, reactive child protection systems to advanced systems designed to support holistic child and family well-being while preventing child maltreatment and unnecessary family separation. This first-of-its-kind partnership is an initiative developed by the U.S. Children's Bureau, Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Prevent Child Abuse America.

Children's Trust continues to advance a policy agenda that focuses on prevention of abuse and neglect and promotes quality early care and economic stability for families in South Carolina. Children's Trust also educates legislators using data on key issues impacting child abuse prevention and safety; develops an array of core competencies and continuum of training/professional development opportunities for the social service sector; and uses local data to guide communities as they develop systems of support to address community specific issues.

### Ensuring Accountability

Children's Trust uses a partnership assessment tool to assess impact as an intermediary organization. As an intermediary organization, Children's Trust partners with family- and child-serving agencies to provide support in designing, implementing, and sustaining evidence-based programs. Children's Trust uses feedback provided through the partnership assessment to identify areas for intentional support based on the nature of the partnership. All trainings and programs conducted through Children's Trust have associated evaluations, which are reviewed regularly. Coaching and technical assistance is offered as needed.

### Evolving Work

Children's Trust recently completed a strategic planning process and developed a new strategic path forward. With a bold vision to ensure prevention services and programs are universally available to all children and families, Children's Trust is focusing on three priority areas.

1. Lead the agenda - As a statewide leader, we seek large-scale transformation that benefits children and families.
2. Change the narrative - As an advocate for children, we know there cannot be large-scale impact without systems level change.
3. Strengthen the network - As an intermediary organization, we work alongside our partners and stakeholders in communities across the state.

*Profile last updated: May 2021*