

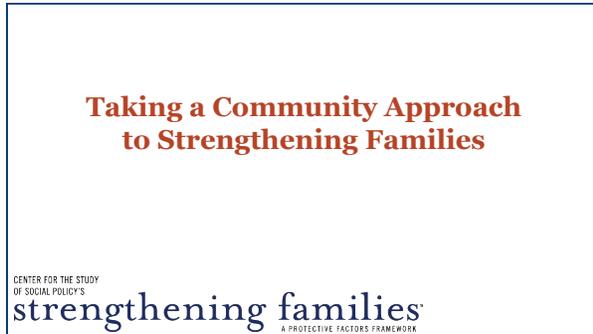
Scripted Curriculum Module:

**Taking a Community Approach to Strengthening Families**

TIME	60 minutes
PURPOSE	To obtain a broader understanding of how community work can support the Strengthening Families approach, and vice versa.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES	Upon completion of this module, the participant will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Describe what a Strengthening Families approach looks like at a community level</li><li>2. Understand what some community approaches look like around the country</li><li>3. Be able to facilitate Strengthening Families engagement at a community level</li></ol>
INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD	Lecture interspersed with interactive dialogue
MATERIALS	n/a
ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY 6-1: Identifying strategies that would work in your community

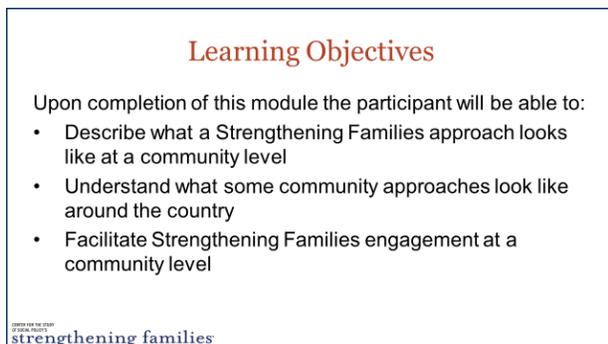
# Taking a Community Approach to Strengthening Families

## SHOW SLIDE 1



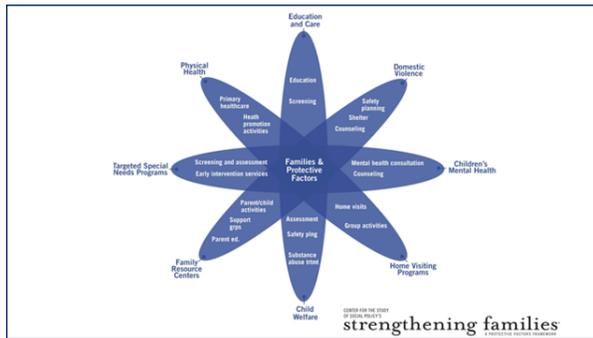
**INTRODUCE:** Welcome back! So far, we've spent a lot of time speaking to how we can build protective factors at the individual and family levels. However, we all know that people and families don't exist within a vacuum. Today, we are going to turn to look specifically at community work, another important piece to building strong families.

## SHOW SLIDE 2



**STATE:** The purpose of this module is to broaden and build your understanding of how the Strengthening Families approach can be used within the context of community work. We will provide several specific examples of community models and teach you how to facilitate a Strengthening Families approach to work in your own community.

**SHOW SLIDE 3**



**EXPLAIN:** Strengthening Families is already being used as a common framework to align practices across different child and family serving disciplines. However, it is important to remember that families in need are generally less likely to turn first to these formal systems and services. Instead, families tend to initially seek support from within their own community-based networks. These networks are more accessible for many families, and, oftentimes, are also less stigmatizing than more formalized, systems level alternatives.

**EXPAND:** Applying the Strengthening Families approach at a community level provides opportunities to reach families earlier on and to drive a deeper, more meaningful impact.

**ASK:** How would applying Strengthening Families at a community level be different than implementing it at the state or system levels?

**Note:** some suggested responses include...

- Because providers have existing relationships and know each other, it will be easier to establish a learning community or community of practice across different kinds of child and family serving providers.
- There are more opportunities to bring in non-traditional partners—grocery stores, parks, faith institutions, after school programs, businesses, etc.
- Using community resources in planning for the use of space and the creation of shared activities.
- There might be more opportunities to mobilize community members to play a role in supporting families.

Basically, when we apply Strengthening Families at a community level there may be some unique opportunities to build off the relationships, patterns of behaviors and attachments people have in and to places as a way of to reinforce the approach. To put it another way, the most natural way to build protective factors may be through the relationships people already

have, in the places they already go and through the things they already care about. Applying Strengthening Families at a community level provides a unique opportunity to do this.

**SHOW SLIDE 4**



**STATE:** Families view services in relationship to everything else in a community—a small part of their everyday world. Mobilized parents may be the single most influential players when it comes to strengthening the many different avenues families use to connect with one another. Parents who share information and referrals with one another provide the unique peer-to-peer assistance that no formalized system can replace. They can also be powerful partners in encouraging systems and policies to respond to community needs. The challenge for service providers is to see their services within the context of community life – not as the singular driving force for change, but rather as a collaborative, communal strength.

**SHOW SLIDE 5**

<b>Individual Actors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individual outreach to families in one's network</li><li>• Everyday actions among neighbors, friends, community members, etc.</li></ul>
<b>Community Institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community activities that build protective factors</li><li>• Small changes in service structure to build protective factors</li><li>• Protective factors aligned activities and services available in community settings (e.g. grocery stores, parks)</li></ul>
<b>Service Programs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Integrate protective factors into assessment</li><li>• Small changes in service structure to build protective factors</li><li>• Collaborations around protective factors</li></ul>

**STATE:** When we think about implementing Strengthening Families at the community level, we think of different groups of actors who can take up the protective factors approach. Three important groups are: individual actors, community institutions and service programs.

- **Service Programs** are programs specifically designed to provide support for children and families. Service programs include both targeted and universal programs.
  - When we talk about **targeted programs** we are talking about programs intended for specific—often at-risk—populations. Service programs may include, for example, domestic violence programs, child welfare programs, or programs for children with special needs. Engaging these programs in a protective factors approach helps to ensure that the most vulnerable families not only receive services to address their known risks, but also receive supports for building their protective factors.
  - **Universal programs**, on the other hand, are programs that serve everyone within the community. These include programs such as child care providers, health providers and after school programs. Engaging these programs helps send the message that a protective factors approach is for all families, thereby decreasing the risk of stigmatization.
- **Community Institutions** are community organizations that don't see themselves necessarily as service providers, but which still reach large numbers of families in the community. Community institutions include, for example, faith institutions (like churches, mosques and temples), parks and recreational programs, libraries, grocery stores, movie theaters, local businesses and restaurants. Because families interact with these institutions on a regular and informal basis, these institutions can provide opportunities to apply a Strengthening Families approach without attaching any stigma to participants.
- The last group is **individual actors**. As we try to build Strengthening Families communities, we have a unique opportunity to engage everyday individuals—as neighbors, friends and community members—in activities that are designed to build protective factors.

**TRANSITION:** To better illustrate these concepts, let's turn to our first case example: the Magnolia Place Service Programs.

## SHOW SLIDE 6

Service Programs

### A case example: Magnolia Place, Los Angeles, California

What would it take to have the 35,000 children living in the neighborhoods within the 5-square mile/500 blocks of the Magnolia Catchment Area break all records of success in their education and their health, and the quality of nurturing care and economic stability they receive from their families and community?

- Use Strengthening Families protective factors as a philosophy to align practice among a network of 75 providers
- Baseline survey of 800 individuals on protective factors
- Café conversations with community members about what protective factors mean to them
- Dashboard—to examine monthly success in engaging families around protective factors
- Using the Early Development Instrument to measure impact on school readiness

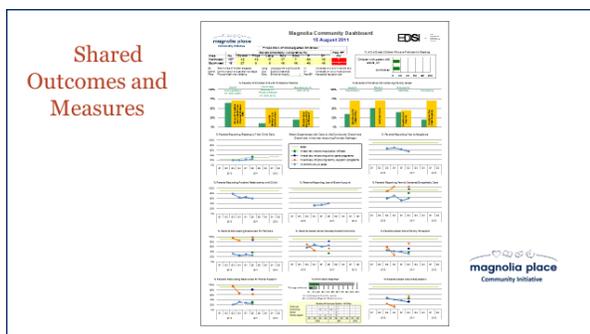
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**strengthening families**  
A COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

**EXPLAIN:** Magnolia Place is a coalition of more than 75 service providers working together to try to change outcomes for children and families in the Magnolia neighborhood of Los Angeles.

**EXPAND:** From the beginning, Magnolia wanted to create an understanding of the Strengthening Families protective factors based in their community members' unique perspectives, beliefs and preferences. They started their work by distributing a survey on protective factors among neighborhood residents. In addition, they hosted a series of Café conversations about the protective factors. Coupled with the surveys, these intimate, structured community conversations allowed community members to gauge their neighborhood's existing knowledge and needs around the protective factors.

**TRANSITION:** As Magnolia Place began to implement the protective factors within their overall framework, they adopted a community dashboard to monitor their work with families.

## SHOW SLIDE 7



**EXPLAIN:** This is a quick screen shot of Magnolia's dashboard. Data is collected and monitored on a monthly basis. Each of the participating providers agrees to administer a very short survey

to a small sample of the families that come into their program each month. Data collected helps to track:

- Whether or not the protective factors are present in the family's life (for example, by seeing whether parents report social ties to their neighbors),
- Whether the provider engaged with the family in a way that helps build protective factors (for example, by determining what percent of parents were asked about developmental concerns), and
- Whether outcome data suggests positive community growth (for example, by looking at Early Development Index data on school readiness).

## SHOW SLIDE 8

Service Programs

### A case example: Fremont, Colorado

Fremont County in Colorado has embraced Strengthening Families as part of a federal early childhood-child welfare grant. They provided incentives to encourage all child and family serving professionals in the county to complete the online "Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life in Your Work" training from the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds as a first step toward building stronger relationships across systems.

- All child and family serving agencies signed off on using the protective factors framework
- 2-day training provided across child and family serving staff
- Staff used paid time to participate in the on-line Strengthening Families training
- A \$25 stipend was given upon completion and the participant was entered into a drawing to win an iPad to use in their work with children and families.

STRONGER TOGETHER  
strengthening families

**STATE:** Our second case example is also based in service programs, this time in the Fremont community of Colorado. Using an early childhood-child welfare grant, Fremont County incentivized child and family serving professionals to complete online trainings around the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework.

**EXPAND:** Building upon this initial work, Fremont County was able to:

- Ensure that all child and family serving agencies signed off on using the Protective Factors Framework,
- Provide comprehensive, two-day trainings to family and child serving staff, and
- Compensate staff for participating in the online Strengthening Families trainings through paid time, a \$25 stipend and entrance in a lottery to win an iPad.

## SHOW SLIDE 9

Service Programs

### A case example: Brevard County, FL

The Brevard Family Partnership, a community-based organization that delivers child welfare services in Brevard County, Florida, launched a "trauma-informed care youth summit" in which over 400 leaders across the community have twice gathered to respond to youth recommendations of what they need to succeed and thrive.

- Community dialogue led by successful young leaders who grew up in foster care.
- Resulted in action steps to be pursued through the system of care including service providers, churches, government leaders, educators, business executives and other stakeholders.
- Youth Thrive committee meets monthly. Goal is to engage the whole community in helping youth to manage risk and move towards resilience.

**YOUTH THRIVE**  
PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

**STATE:** Youth Thrive is working with the Brevard Family Partnership, a community-based organization that delivers child welfare services in Brevard County, Florida. The Brevard Family Partnership's adoption of the Youth Thrive Framework complements the State's agenda to create "normalcy" in the lives and experiences of all youth in Florida's foster care system. Brevard County represents the potential of a community-driven approach for helping youth in care to thrive.

The Partnership has brought together a roundtable of representatives from the different sectors serving adolescents. In Brevard, a "trauma-informed care youth summit" was launched in which more than 400 leaders across the community have twice gathered to respond to the youth's recommendations of what they need to succeed and thrive. This community dialogue was led by successful young leaders who grew up in foster care. It resulted in action steps to be pursued through the system of care including service providers, churches, government leaders, educators, business executive and other stakeholders. The Youth Thrive committee meets on a monthly basis to identify and implement ways in which policies and practices within the region can adopt the protective and promotive factors framework. The committee's goal is to engage the whole community in helping youth to manage risk and move towards resilience.

## SHOW SLIDE 10

Community Institutions

### A case example: Baptist Convention of New Jersey

In October of 2014, the General Baptist Convention of New Jersey voted to become Strengthening Families churches. The pastor of each of these churches will sign a covenant to promote the protective factors of families in their congregations. Reverend Darrell Armstrong, an early adopter of Strengthening Families, developed the covenant as a tool to engage clergy of any faith tradition in helping families to build protective factors as part of their ministry.

- Over 300 churches in NJ will sign the covenant
- Covenant is available online for any clergy member to sign
- Protective factors have been aligned to key passages from scripture
- Training available for clergy and lay faith leaders on how to implement a protective factors approach in their work with parishioners

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**strengthening families**  
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**STATE:** Our next case example relates to engaging community institutions. In 2014, the Baptist Convention of New Jersey voted to implement Strengthening Families in all of its participating churches, and all the convention's pastors signed a covenant to promote the Protective Factors Framework within their respective congregations.

**EXPAND:** One man in particular, Reverend Darrell Armstrong, played an important role in the implementation of this effort. An early adopter of Strengthening Families, Reverend Armstrong also developed the 2014 covenant as an interfaith tool, applicable to interested clergy from across any faith tradition.

**EXPLAIN:** As such, this covenant set an important precedent for clergy hoping to engage families in building protective factors. Now, several important landmarks have been reached, for example:

- Over 300 churches in New Jersey plan to sign the covenant,
- Protective factors have been aligned to key passages from scripture, and
- Trainings are now available for clergy and lay faith leaders in regards to implementing the Protective Factors Framework as part of their ministry.

## SHOW SLIDE 11

**Community Institutions** **A case example: Leelanau, Michigan**

When the Leelanau Children's Center, one of the early Strengthening Families exemplary programs, decided they wanted to bring Strengthening Families to their community, they started making some unusual partnerships. For example, they knew traditional parenting education classes often face attrition and difficulty attracting the very families that need the support the most. So they teamed up with the local laundromat and pizza parlor to host a family night with conversation about common parenting issues. The pizza and laundry are free and the events are packed.

- Building protective factors in places where families already go
- Partnership with service providers and community institutions

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A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH

**TRANSITION:** Another successful example related to engaging community institutions comes from the Leelenau Children's Center. Located in Michigan, the Leelenau Children's Center was one of the first programs designated as "exemplary" by the Strengthening Families Initiative. Hoping to increase their impact throughout the community, the Center decided to begin engaging hard-to-reach families through partnerships with community institutions.

**EXPAND:** For example, the Center programmers recognized that, oftentimes, the families most at risk for negative parenting outcomes are also the families who face the most barriers to accessing traditional parenting education classes. In order to provide these families with parenting information, they partnered with the local Laundromat and pizza parlor to host family night events where community members could gather to discuss common parenting issues. These events quickly became incredibly popular, and served to successfully build protective factors within accessible, non-stigmatizing, community-based settings.

## SHOW SLIDE 12

**Community Institutions** **A case example: Bronx, New York**

The Next Generation Center, a signature program of the Children's Aid Society, was established to address the special needs of New York City's youth in foster care as they transition to adulthood. Next Gen strives to improve outcomes for young people across three key domains: education, employment and life skills by intentionally connecting young people to positive institutions (schools, work, family) and diverting them from negative influences (crime, gangs).

- Recreation, social support, employment training, education and coaching
- Use of restorative practices to address problems with youth when the arise



**YOUTH THRIVE**  
PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

**STATE:** Communities can build protective and promotive factors in youth in many, many different ways. An example is: The Next Generation Center which was established to address the special needs of New York City's youth in foster care as they transition to adulthood. It is a welcoming community space where teenagers and young adults can access a variety of services, participate in activities, or spend time hanging out with supportive staff and peers. A signature program of the Children's Aid Society, Next Gen strives to improve outcomes for young people across three key domains: education, employment and life skills. The Center intentionally connects young people to positive institutions (schools, work, family) and diverts them from negative influences (crime, gangs). To create a strong community, NGC staff believe in "relentless engagement" and use restorative practices to address problems with youth when they arise.

### SHOW SLIDE 13

**Individual Actors** **A case example: Charlevoix, Michigan**

When the Great Start Collaborative in Charlevoix, Michigan decided that they wanted to take on Strengthening Families, they didn't want it to be something that only service providers were doing they wanted it to be something that everyone was talking about. They developed an engaging set of posters, a website with individual actions you can take and a freecycle campaign for families to exchange books and other resources.

- Public education campaign to build broad awareness of the protective factors
- Freecycle campaign as a way to take individual action to support others around them

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES  
**strengthening families**

**STATE:** Now we are going to take a look at the role that individual actors can play in a community.

**EXPLAIN:** In Charlevoix, Michigan, a child and family serving council called The Great Start Collaborative decided to take on the task of making Strengthening Families accessible to individuals in their community. Hoping to build knowledge around the approach, the Collaborative developed a public education campaign about the protective factors.

**EXPAND:** This campaign included several initiatives, such as poster distributions, the launching a website with individual action steps and the creation of a "Freecycle Campaign" that allowed families to connect and exchange resources.

**SHOW SLIDE 14**



**STATE:** This slide shows examples of the posters developed by Charlevoix County to explain the Protective Factors. The goal here was twofold. First, the posters were designed to build broader awareness of the protective factors across the community; and, second, the posters served to represent the community partners committed to building a protective factors agenda.

**SHOW SLIDE 15**

**Individual Actors** Case example: **Connect the Dots**  
Building a movement for children and families

Connect the Dots is a national effort organized around the simple idea that we all have a role to play in making our communities places where children and families can thrive. The goal is to lift up everyday actions that individuals are already taking to build protective factors and support the families around them, and to help build connections between individuals and organizations who are taking these actions.

- Focus on individual actions anyone can take
- Intentional use of social media as a platform for engaging individuals
- Desire to create an interactive platform where individuals can be inspired by the actions of others, and mobilized to act for policy changes that will help children and families thrive

[www.whatsyourdot.org](http://www.whatsyourdot.org)

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CHILDREN'S TRUST & PREVENTION

**STATE:** For our final example we are going to look at something a little different: a national effort being led by CSSP and a number of other national organizations to engage individuals in taking everyday actions that help to build protective factors for the families they touch in their everyday lives. Connect the Dots is building a movement with the use of social media tools—an interactive website, Twitter, Facebook – to inspire individuals to share how they help to make their community a place where children and families can thrive, get new ideas for additional actions they can take and connect with others taking action in their communities.

**SHOW SLIDE 16**



**STATE:** The efforts of Connect the Dots fall into three categories that feed into each other.

**EXPAND:** In the first phase, we start with getting people to commit every day actions that make their communities better places for children and families:

- Helping them to see the things they already do that strengthen families (their own and those around them)
- Educating about what families need (framed in protective factors)
- Empowering people to see that they can make a difference

Then, engaging them at the community level:

- Fostering a sense of connectedness
- Connecting with others who share their commitment to children and families
- Building relationships with each other and with the organizations that can advance this work at the local and state level

Once people are engaged at the community level, we can start to engage them in issues and mobilize them to advocate for or against particular policies that affect children and families.

## SHOW SLIDE 17



**STATE:** These are some screen shots and visuals from the Connect the Dots campaign.

## SHOW SLIDE 18

**Individual Actors** **A case example: Jacksonville, Florida**

Just Like Me is a three-week cultural arts and education summer camp for youth involved in the foster care system to help them develop their artistic talents and gain skills such as trust, teamwork, problem solving and decision-making.



- Each youth participant has the opportunity to work with artists from the local community and leaves camp with a product of their work
- Culminating performance for an enthusiastic audience of family, foster parents, staff, media and community members

**YOUTH THRIVE**  
PROTECTING & PROMOTING PATHWAYS FOR HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING

**STATE:** Another example is a community resource for youth when school is out. At Just Like Me, a three-week cultural arts and education summer camp, youth are given complete creative license to follow their interests and write, sing, dance, paint or make videos that tell their own stories. Just Like Me was designed for youth involved in the foster care system to help them develop their artistic talents and gain skills such as trust, teamwork, problem solving and decision-making. Each youth participant has the opportunity to work with artists from the local community and leaves camp with a product of their work. Everyone participates in a culminating performance for an enthusiastic audience of family, foster parents, staff, media and community members.

**ACTIVITY 6-1: Identifying strategies that would work in your community**

<b>TIME</b>	30 minutes
<b>PURPOSE</b>	To reflect on community strategies and apply thinking to participants' own community
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</b>	Upon completion of this activity, participants will have identified specific activities that could work in their own community.
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD</b>	Small group discussions
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Handout 6-1: Community Partner's Calendar
<b>DIRECTIONS</b>	<p>Pass out Handout 6-1.</p> <p>Ask participants to review Handout 6-1 and reflect on the case examples. Based on what they have heard and what is in the handout ask them to identify at least three strategies that they feel might work in their community.</p> <p>Give everyone 5 minutes for reflection and to jot notes and then ask them to talk at their table for 15 minutes.</p> <p>After 15 minutes have passed ask each group to report out the highlights from their conversation.</p> <p>* See trainer's note for a suggested adaptation to use this exercise in a community planning process.</p>

**STATE:** We are going to pause here for a second to talk about the strategies which we just discussed. I want to ask you to have a 15 minute conversation at your table focused on the following questions:

- Which strategies that were present do you think would work in your community?
- Did these strategies spark other ideas about what you might do in your community?

Choose one person in your group to serve as a recorder and a note taker. At the end of 15 minutes you are going to report back to the group. Before you start talking I am going to give you five minutes to think and jot down notes.

## TRAINER'S NOTE:



If you are working with a planning group who are all from the same community this exercise can be expanded to turn it into a planning activity. Use instructions above but while the report back happens chart the response to create a more comprehensive list of potential strategies. Distribute sticky dots and ask participants to vote for three strategies that they feel might be most appropriate to their community.

## SHOW SLIDE 19

### Building blocks for a community effort

- Leadership team to coordinate the effort
- Structure for mutual accountability to the protective factors
- Shared training around protective factors
- Messaging and communication tools
- Parent-to-parent approaches (such as cafés)

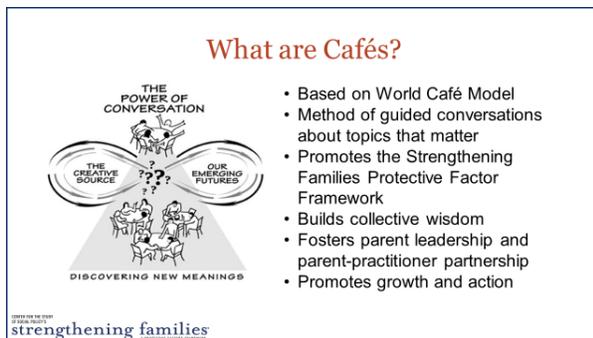
STRENGTHENING FAMILIES  
strengthening families

**STATE:** In addition to strategies, there needs to be an overall architecture that will guide and make sure community level protective factors are on track. This slide shows important building blocks that are in place in many of the community-level Strengthening Families efforts we have looked at.

- First, there is a need for a leadership team in charge of coordination. Leadership teams are common to most state level Strengthening Families efforts and help to create a space for coordinated planning and collective action. Based on our knowledge of team structures from around the country, we have developed additional materials and tools to support leadership team implementation.
- Another crucial building block is some system for mutual accountability to the protective factors. The Magnolia Place Dashboard is a great example of such a structure. When we talk about mutual accountability we want to stress that we define this as the mechanisms we put into place to ensure each partner is fulfilling their role. This might be consequences for not doing something, but also incentives for doing something. In Fremont for example, the potential of winning a free iPad was an incentive built in to help ensure workers were participating in the training.

- Shared training can provide an important platform for ensuring that providers across many different disciplines have a shared understanding of the approach and the roles of each partner in implementing.
- Similarly, messaging and communications tools, like the posters that Charlevoix and a number of other community level efforts have developed, help to create a common language around the protective factors approach and build a sense of identity around the effort. In a number of places these type of tools are being used to identify "Strengthening Families places" within the community.
- Finally, we want to talk in more detail about one particular strategy being used around the country and that is the use of parent or community cafés as a structured way to build parent to parent conversations around the protective factors.

**SHOW SLIDE 20**



**STATE:** Cafés are a method of facilitating meaningful, reflective conversations that promote leadership and collaboration. These gatherings, derived from the World Café model, bring community members together for a series of structured conversations that directly or indirectly address protective factors. Through participation in cafés, parents and caregivers build leadership and relationships as well as the protective factors that help to strengthen their families.

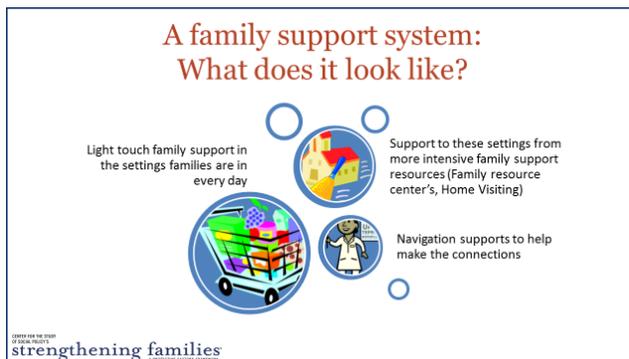
**EXPAND:** Cafés are characterized by:

- An informal, safe and inviting atmosphere with small tables arranged to mimic a café,
- Very small groups of 3 to 5 individuals engaged in peer-based conversations focused around specific questions,
- A structure that allows participants to move among café tables and converse with others through multiple rounds of conversations, and

- A peer host who has participated in an earlier café series and has received training or orientation in creating an inclusive café conversation—and, in the case of cafés being used to support Strengthening Families work, who is also familiar with the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework.

**SUM UP:** The goal of these Cafés is to create an intimate environment where parents, caregivers and community members can share and support each other in strengthening families.

**SHOW SLIDE 21**



**STATE:** I want to end by talking quickly about the bigger picture of how a protective and promotive factors approach at the community level can contribute to the building of a family support system for all families in the community. We know that all families need support at one time or another, but the nature of where they feel most comfortable getting these supports may be very different. Ideally what Strengthening Families can help us build is a family support system within which there are many light touch opportunities across the community where families get opportunities to build protective factors within the places and experiences that they have in their daily lives. But, when families appear to need support, they are able to connect quickly and easily to those who have more specialized knowledge and skills in working with and supporting families.