

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES WISCONSIN: STATE PROFILE

Infrastructure

Wisconsin was among the first Strengthening Families initiative pilot states. The Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board (CANPB) partners with Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA) to convene a state leadership team that includes representatives from the Departments of Children and Families, Public Instruction and Health Services, Office of Children's Mental Health, Wisconsin Professional Development System, the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health, Wisconsin Head Start Association and various family serving agencies. All saw the value in enhancing connections with systems like early care and education as a means of preventing child abuse and neglect. The partners find that Strengthening Families provides a useful, strategic framework for working with families and the systems that serve them.

At this time there are no designated financial resources going towards the Strengthening Families leadership team in Wisconsin. All funds are provided in-kind by the respective agencies.

Parent Partnerships

Parent partnerships are happening in many sectors within Wisconsin. Parent Cafés are a catalyst for partnering with parents/caregivers, and communities throughout Wisconsin have been trained and are regularly implementing cafés with parents on their leadership/planning teams. In 2015, SFTA began implementing Parent Cafés statewide in partnership with Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies and Family Resource Centers (FRCs).

CANPB coordinates the *Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life in Your Work* training for family support professionals throughout WI. As part of that initiative, CANPB coordinates and funds a network of parents who, together with a certified training partner, co-facilitate at each training to provide lived experience from a parent's perspective.

Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

YoungStar, Wisconsin's child care quality rating and improvement system, identifies the Protective Factors Framework as 1 of 7 components of high quality practices and supports training and coaching for early care and education providers.

As the statewide network of CCR&R agencies and FRCs, SFTA has a protective factors training plan and provides technical assistance to child care facilities interested in using the Protective Factors Framework in their settings. SFTA continually increases statewide access to Strengthening Families trainings with the training being available both in person and online, and an emphasis on serving children and families from underserved language and cultural groups and areas.

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	✓

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In an effort to build awareness of the five protective factors among parents and community members, CANPB, in partnership with parents and professionals, developed the [Five for Families](#) public awareness campaign. Promotional materials guide viewers to a Five for Families website, which provides information and resources on each of the "Five Strengths". The Five Strengths are the Protective Factors interpreted using every day, family friendly language. CANPB also teamed up with the University of Wisconsin Madison, Division of Extension to produce a six-part Five for Families video series for Facebook as part of Extension's "[Parenting....Behind the Behavior](#)" parent education programming. Each video focuses on one of the strengths.

Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

SFTA offers training and technical assistance on the Protective Factors Framework to early care and education providers and child care centers. From 2011-2020, there have been 429 Strengthening Families Trainings with 8,250 participants. In 2016, CANBP began partnering with family serving agencies throughout Wisconsin to offer 12 hours of the *Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life in Your Work* training each year. The training supports family support professionals to incorporate protective factors into their everyday work. In fiscal year 2020 1,236 family serving professionals from 59 Wisconsin counties participated in 94 protective factors courses.

Wisconsin was recently awarded federal funds through the Preschool Development Grant, a portion of which is being allocated to support the development of a family support infrastructure to enhance and unify the FRC network in the state. This infrastructure will include an emphasis on integrating protective factors to enhance practice and policies within an agency and to ensure staff are implementing protective factors and using a strengths-based approach.

Ensuring Accountability

Agencies have been trained to administer the Parents Assessment of Protective Factors (PAPF) to develop goal setting with parents around

their protective factors. Though not required, the PAPF scoring has been built into the Wisconsin Prevention Reporting System DAISEY and outcomes can be measured by programs that have integrated this tool in their practice. There are plans in place to enhance DAISEY to include more features that will track agencies' use and integration of protective factors from their Strengthening Families Community Based Program Self-Assessment action plans.

Evolving Work

Wisconsin is establishing a formalized FRC infrastructure to ensure uniform standards of quality in family support programming throughout the state. Agencies will implement the *Standards of Quality for For Family Strengthening and Support* and CSSP's Strengthening Families Community Based Self Assessment. Emphasis will be placed on integrating protective factors into all aspects of the FRCs.

Two related projects will focus on parents. Parent advisory committees and other strategies will be implemented to incorporate parent voice as part of FRC infrastructure development. The Five for Families curriculum, currently under development, will be offered to parents in a variety of modalities, including large groups, small groups, and one-on-one. Wisconsin will continue to focus its efforts on policy-level changes that promote the Strengthening Families philosophy. Better integration continues to occur between the Preschool Development Grant efforts, the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council and Strengthening Families.