ESSENTIALS FOR CHILDHOOD AND STRENGTHENING FAMILIES™

With the launch of the Essentials for Childhood framework from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), many prevention and public health leaders have asked about the relationship between Essentials and the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework from the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). Both frameworks are designed to guide efforts to improve outcomes for children and families, and both are designed for cross-systems implementation. This document briefly summarizes the two frameworks, highlights the commonalities and differences between them and identifies ways that states and systems using both frameworks may be able to use them together.

Common goals

Both Strengthening Families and Essentials for Childhood seek to assure that children have **safe, stable, nurturing relationships** with parents and other direct caregivers and in their broader social environments. Implementation of both frameworks focuses on shifting the environments in which families live their lives, so that environments are safe, stable and nurturing, and so that it is easier for parents and caregivers to provide safe, stable, nurturing relationships for their children.

Overlapping focus areas

The primary difference between the frameworks comes in the contexts and environments that are the target of implementation. These differences can best be understood in the context of an ecological model, as pictured on page 2. The model shows the child at the center of concentric circles representing the relationships and environments that influence his or her development.

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.

For more information, visit www.strengtheningfamilies.net.

Essentials for Childhood

Essentials for Childhood, assuring safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments is CDC's framework for preventing child maltreatment for all children. The Essentials for Childhood framework suggests strategies for communities to consider in four goal areas:

- Raise awareness and commitment to promote safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments
- Use data to inform actions
- Create the context for healthy children and families through norms change and programs
- Create the context for healthy children and families through policies

CDC's 5 funded state health departments and their partners and over 20 unfunded states are using the Essentials for Childhood framework and a collective impact approach to increase safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. Collective impact is the commitment of different sectors to a common agenda for solving a complex social problem, and is more rigorous and specific than traditional collaborations. States are encouraged to engage new partners, such as the business sector, work in all four goal areas, and apply a health equity lens.

For more information, visit: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/essentials

While both frameworks are ultimately concerned with the relationships within the family context, Strengthening Families primarily seeks to influence those relationships by intervening in the programs and systems where families interact with professionals – such as early care and education programs, child welfare systems and other child- and family-serving programs. The Essentials for Childhood framework focuses more on the broader environment and larger forces that influence

Levels of Focus
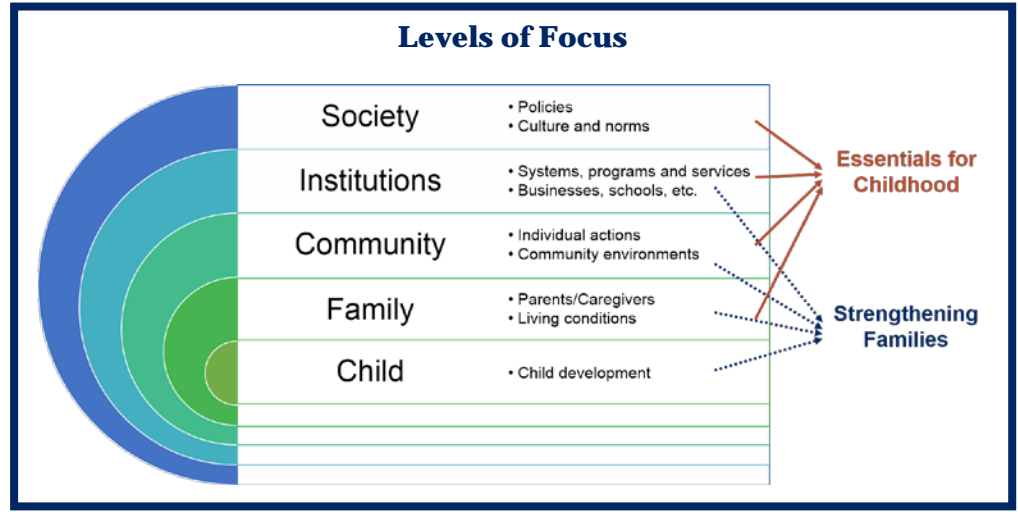
communities where families live, work, and play and in turn, influence relationships at the family level. Examples of these larger forces include policies that assure access to health and mental health care, high quality and affordable childcare and pre-K as well as societal norms that support safe, stable, nurturing relationships and neighborhood or community factors that influence how easily parents can provide safe, stable, nurturing relationships.

Benefits and considerations when implementing both frameworks

States, communities and organizations will find that Strengthening Families and Essentials for Childhood are mutually supportive; that is, implementing one framework will strengthen and support the implementation of the other. Implementing the frameworks together will enrich ongoing work to improve conditions for children and families. The table below lists benefits of implementing the frameworks together as well as considerations reflecting the differences in the two.

Benefits of joint implementation	Things to consider
Strengthening Families leadership team provides a strong cross-systems base for the collective impact approach needed for Essentials for Childhood.	Existing leadership teams may need to be broadened to include: Health departments, child and family advocates, legislative partners, businesses, policy experts.
The Essentials for Childhood framework provides a broad "umbrella" that many different strategies can fit under and Essentials goal areas can apply to prevention work in many areas including the Strengthening Families Protective Factors.	How can focusing on the four goal areas (raising awareness/commitment, using data, creating the context through norms change, programs and policies) also help in promoting the Protective Factors work?
Protective factors provide a common language to talk about some of the things all families need, and provides some markers of what needs to be in place to assure safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments at the individual level.

Protective Factors address part of one of the four goal areas of Essentials for Childhood: Creating the context through programs.

Essentials for Childhood and Strengthening Families working together can better assure that families and communities can provide safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for children. | Protective factors do not explicitly address the type of macro level policy and cultural changes that are necessary to assure Essentials for Childhood. For example:
• Reducing inequities
• Livable wages
• Access to safe, stable, affordable housing
A focus on protective factors implementation in child and family serving systems alone will not help you to identify or make significant progress on these type of changes. |