



## SOLUTION BASED CASEWORK

### STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Strengthening Families is a research-informed, cost-effective strategy to increase family stability, enhance child development and reduce child abuse and neglect. It builds 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

Through the Strengthening Families Initiative, more than thirty states are shifting policy, funding and training to help programs working with children and families build protective factors with families. Many states also use the Strengthening Families approach to inform state prevention strategies, strengthen families in the child welfare system and engage parents and communities in building protective factors.

### USING STRENGTHENING FAMILIES IN A SOLUTION BASED CASEWORK PRACTICE MODEL IN CHILD WELFARE

The Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy offers rich opportunities for child welfare systems to increase their focus on well-being, deepen their partnerships with other agencies and systems and take a strength-based approach to their work with children and families.

Protective factors approaches are used in child welfare in two ways, often in tandem:

- By focusing on the child themselves and the protective factors that will help them thrive
- By focusing on the protective factors of caregivers to help them provide the nurturing environment that will support children

Strengthening Families (SF) can be used in conjunction with the Solution Based Casework model to assist with the identification of both strengths and weaknesses in the home, in order to better define problems and develop relationships. The primary goals for Strengthening Families are optimal child development, reduced child abuse and neglect and strengthened families. The primary SBC and child welfare goals of safety, permanence and well-being go hand in hand with the primary goals of Strengthening Families. When practiced together, SBC and Strengthening Families provide a comprehensive approach to child and family well-being.

Implementing Strengthening Families also helps child welfare systems and workers to "speak the same language" as other providers of services to children and families. Strengthening Families efforts provide a cross-systems framework for family support and capacity building. State and local initiatives are led by cross-system leadership teams representing a diverse set of disciplines. In most states, Strengthening Families is being implemented broadly in settings as diverse as early childhood centers, family support programs, parenting programs and other venues that serve young children and their families. Child welfare systems can join in these efforts to develop greater supports for children and families, working together across systems toward common goals of building protective factors and improving child and family well-being.

Child welfare systems that have embraced a protective factors approach have found that it reenergizes family service workers, enriches partnerships with families and reduces tendencies for service providers to unknowingly work at cross-purposes.



MAKING THE  
LINK

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Solution Based Casework is an evidence-based, family centered model that seeks to help the family team organize, prioritize and document the steps they will take to create safety, improved well-being and permanency for their children. It was developed by integrating theory from Family Development Theory (Carter and McGoldrick, 1999), Cognitive Behavioral Theory (Marlatt & Gordon, 1985; Pithers, 1990) and Solution Focused Theory (Berg, 1994; DeShazer, 1988).

The three basic goals of the model include:

1. Develop partnerships with the family, providers and family networks.
2. Focus on pragmatic everyday family tasks.
3. Promote specific prevention skills needed for the family to successfully fulfill these everyday tasks.

To learn more about Solution Based Casework, visit  
<http://www.solutionbasedcasework.com/>.



**Solution Based Casework**  
*Sometimes the simple things are the most radical.*

### HOW SOLUTION BASED CASEWORK LINKS TO THE STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

Both the Solution Based Casework (SBC) model and the Strengthening Families framework call for shifts in core elements of practice.

SBC uses a system of milestones to achieve common goals. This model encourages relationship building and collaboration with families to recognize strengths as well as weaknesses. This collaboration leads to the development of a pragmatic, attainable plan for success. SBC uses tools to reach goals set by both the agency and the family themselves. It celebrates successes, which empowers families to continue supported progress.

Many aspects of SBC support the building of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors:

**Parental Resilience:** SBC builds on solution-focused tenets that child welfare clients:

1. Need significant encouragement to combat discouragement
2. Possess unnoticed and unrecognized skills that can be used in the anticipation and prevention of child maltreatment.

Action-based case plans are owned and developed by the family and are skill focused as opposed to "compliance focused" thus helping families build resilience by building problem solving skills.

**Social Connections:** In planning the expertise within the family, the families' network of providers and community relationships is employed. There is a strong focus on building or expanding the parent's social network.

**Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** The assessment focuses on parenting issues that all families face given a child of a certain age, regardless of race, socioeconomic background or culture. The details of those situations are assessed and tracked at the family and individual levels. Tip sheets are available to support families with common parenting issues.

**Concrete Support in Times of Need:** As opposed to developing a traditional service plan, SBC develops individual and family level action plans aimed at addressing specific challenges the family is facing. Services and supports are tied to achieving these action plans.

**Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** The focus on specific developmental challenges faced by children provides an opportunity to bring children's social and emotional development to the center of planning conversations with families.