

# STRENGTHENING FAMILIES KENTUCKY STATE PROFILE

## Infrastructure

In 2013, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood and the Kentucky Department for Public Health convened a group inclusive of many organizations that touch families to explore the implementation of the Strengthening Families framework. These organizations represented by the Leadership Team below made a commitment to embed the protective factors in the daily practice of government and community-based programs. In January 2014, the Leadership Team developed a strategic plan to move the Kentucky Strengthening Families (KYSF) initiative forward in the Commonwealth.

### KYSF Leadership Team:

- CoStars by the Children's Home
- Department for Public Health, Division of Maternal and Child Health
- Governor's Office of Early Childhood
- Children, Inc.
- Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities
- Department for Community Based Services, Division of Child Care
- Department for Community Based Services, Division of Protection and Permanency
- Department of Education
- Family Resource and Youth Services Centers
- Kentucky Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs
- Kentucky Head Start Association
- Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children, Inc.
- Metro United Way
- Partners for Education at Berea College
- Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky
- Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
- UK Human Development Institute
- 4C for Children
- Parent Consultant, Department for Public Health
- Parent Representatives

All members of the Leadership Team volunteer their time to attend meetings. KYSF maintains a listserv, website, and online training portal to ensure strong communication among providers and families implementing the KYSF initiative. Funding from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act has been made available to support child care centers across Kentucky on the Protective Factors and Trauma-Informed Care and Resiliency training.

## Strengthening Families

Strengthening Families<sup>TM</sup> 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

[Families - Governor's Office of Early Childhood \(ky.gov\)](https://www.ky.gov/families-governors-office-early-childhood)

### State Contact

**Kristen Martin, MS, LMFT**  
Early Childhood Mental Health Program Administrator  
Department for Public Health  
[Kristen.martin@ky.gov](mailto:Kristen.martin@ky.gov)  
502-564-3756, ext 4361

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## Parent Partnerships

A parent consultant with the Department for Public Health, along with two other parent representatives, participate in the Leadership Team to provide input for the state-level coordination of Strengthening Families. The KYSF initiative supports the Parent Café model, and in 2015, collaborated with Be Strong Families to create a model that is currently being implemented throughout the Commonwealth. In order to maximize parent engagement, training of trainer events were offered to individuals and organizations to facilitate Parent Café events in their own community.

## Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

The KYSF initiative includes a "KYSF Starter Kit" for any provider or family interested in learning how to implement KYSF through small yet significant steps. KYSF is proud of the strength-based, family-driven resources and materials available for providers and families in Kentucky. View the "KYSF Starter Kit" and other resources here: [Families - Governor's Office of Early Childhood \(ky.gov\)](https://www.ky.gov/families-governors-office-early-childhood)

## Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

KYSF is working to shift practice, policies and systems to embrace five core beliefs in a shared commitment to:

1. Promote strong families and healthy development for families prenatally through age five
2. Partner with all families and celebrate differences
3. Use protective factors as a strengths-based philosophy to buffer for toxic stress
4. Build knowledge and skills for individual and system change
5. Create safe, stable and nurturing environments for people to have responsive and caring relationships

KYSF recognizes Nurturing and Attachment as a sixth Protective Factor. In response to the five core beliefs above, KYSF understood that *families ensuring children feel loved and safe* as a critical component. Specifically, the KYSF initiative focuses on ways to buffer toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences in order for families and providers to understand and promote the importance that a loving and nurturing bond between a child and caregiver is a crucial part of their development.

## Ensuring Accountability

KYSF will begin to utilize the Be Strong Families Participant Feedback Form for Parent Cafés in order to assess the implementation and impact of the Café;

the KYSF Organization Readiness Checklist, which is an original survey based on an organization's current level of involvement and anticipated level of involvement; and promote the Protective Factors Survey (FRIENDS National Network) as a resource for trainers. These measurements have shown to be useful in meeting organizations, families and communities where they are. In addition, Kentucky's statewide early care and education training portal (ECE-TRIS) collects information on training numbers and evaluates understanding after participants complete the free online KYSF Overview Training.

## Evolving Work

KYSF is partnering with several organizations across Kentucky to provide training on the Protective Factors. The implementation of KYSF Parent Cafés continues to build excitement and interest with local communities as an avenue to support parents to build Protective Factors, especially during the COVID pandemic.