

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES CALIFORNIA: STATE PROFILE

Infrastructure

California began its Strengthening Families efforts in 2007; partners included the California Department of Social Services/Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP), Strategies (a statewide capacity-building network funded by OCAP), the California Department of Public Health Maternal Child & Adolescent Health Division, First 5 county commissions, the CA Department of Education, Early Education and Support Division, the Child Welfare Council, Child Welfare Director's Association, Child Care Resource and Referral Network, California Network of Family Strengthening Networks, Parents Anonymous, Parent Services Project, Family Resource Network of California, and various county representatives.

More recently, in January 2019 the OCAP hosted a Prevention Summit that required a public-private structure with the Child Welfare Director and Child Abuse Prevention Council Director as co-leads for each county's prevention planning team, inviting other partners such as Community Based Child and Family Serving Organizations, Behavioral Health, Public Health, Education, Probation, and Healthcare to come together and begin the work of prevention planning. At that time, 23 county teams of ten attended the Summit and all committed to continuing the work of prevention planning. Several counties have committed to using the protective factors to guide their prevention planning strategies. The OCAP has continued and will continue to lead and support California's child abuse prevention systems and activities with technical assistance provided by Strategies Technical Assistance ("Strategies TA"), an OCAP-funded grantee, to build on the momentum that has begun in recent years. Strategies TA uses the Strengthening Families approach to guide their work with county prevention planning teams.

Parent Partnerships

The OCAP funds the Family Hui parent leadership model implemented by Lead4Tomorrow. The Family Hui program is a peer-to-peer parent-strengthening program that bolsters the capacity of parents to build resiliency in families. Family Hui focuses on early childhood development and on activities designed to encourage parents to reflect on their own childhood, dreams, trauma, and triggers. Family Hui combines evidence-based research, reflective inquiry, and peer-led conversations to create hui or circles of support. Family Hui is based on the Five Protective Factors both in content and design.

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	✓

Learn More

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/ocap>

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Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

The demand for training on the protective factors has continually grown over the years. Strategies TA and the newly funded California Training Institute (CalTrin) provide introductory trainings and workshops as well as advanced modules specifically focused on the Strengthening Families approach. First 5 Commissions have provided professional development opportunities. Finally, many California organizations have had staff members certified as trainers by the Children's Trust Fund Alliance.

Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

In May of 2020, the OCAP released its strategic plan for 2020–2025, carrying forward the themes of Lifting, Linking, and Leveraging from its previous strategic plan. Lifting refers to increasing the capacity of parents and prevention partners to protect children from abuse and neglect; linking describes how the OCAP unites prevention partners around a shared agenda; and leveraging encompasses utilizing resources to build protective factors through community and natural supports. These are strategies that support daily decisions and long-term goals for investing in a statewide prevention agenda.

In 2018 the California Family Strengthening Network (CFSN) merged with the California Family Resource Association (CFRA) to more effectively support and encourage the field to use quality practices, including the protective factors. Creating a system of care across the state to support continued learning, emerging trends, and trust building with programs, agencies, and networks has increased the impact of Strengthening Families in the state. The combined networks have stronger strategic positions with members, funders, and policymakers to increase awareness of issues that impact families.

Ensuring Accountability

Strengthening Families evaluation practices are emerging across California. Agencies across California have embraced the revised Strengthening Families program self-assessments. Family resource centers use the Family Development Matrix, which is aligned with the five protective factors. This allows measurement of improved outcomes for Child Welfare Differential Response referrals and other at-risk families served. Using a collaborative design, each agency network shares outcome indicators between Family Resource Centers, Child Welfare agencies and other community organizations.

The OCAP has implemented a Protective Factors Survey (PFS) Database to move California toward standard data collection of prevention programs. The Database is a collection system for the PFS surveys so that counties can evaluate if protective factors are being built based on program delivery. The OCAP's goal is for all counties to utilize the PFS survey as a program evaluation tool and to launch the Database in their respective communities.

Evolving Work

Strategies TA will support the development of prevention planning teams to advance the goal of integrating the protective factors in child and family serving systems throughout the state of California, and CalTrin will provide regular Strengthening Families 101 trainings as well as additional trainings including a Leadership Workshop, which will transform organizations to move beyond education toward integration and accountability.