

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES GEORGIA: STATE PROFILE

Infrastructure

The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), Prevention and Community Support Section (PCS), provides funding through the Federal Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant Program for Strengthening Families Georgia (SFG). Since its inception in 2006, SFG has expanded from its original commitment to embed the Protective Factor framework into early care and education to an initiative aimed at embedding the Protective Factors throughout all systems, programs, and services supporting families with young children in Georgia. In October 2019 SFG became part of Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) Georgia, a strong statewide network and longtime SFG partner which works to prevent child maltreatment.

SFG's major partners include: GA DFCS, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, GA Department of Early Care and Learning, GA Department of Education, GA Department of Public Health, GA Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers, Technical College System of GA, United Way of Greater Atlanta, Black Child Development Institute – Atlanta Affiliate, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, GA Family Connection Partnership, Head Start Collaboration Office, GA Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics, and Parent Leaders and Advocates.

Parent Partnerships

Parent leaders have always served on the SFG Leadership Team. Our parent partners are valued through the implementation of parent activities, parent leadership roles, and by creating an environment where parents' opinions and needs are respected.

In 2019 PCS at GA DFCS formed a Parent Advisory Council. The council works with PCS to help expand meaningful partnerships between parents and staff throughout the system. With the Council's guidance, SFG will be able to further build the capacity of our network to grow family engagement development at organizational and community levels.

In 2020, with the inception of the COVID pandemic, SFG developed virtual opportunities for parents and community members to socially connect and strengthen their Protective Factors through knowledge and conversation.

Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

The SFG Leadership Team guides policy and decision-making related to the allocation of resources, service configurations, training efforts, and priorities of agencies, organizations, and individuals serving or working on behalf of families with young children.

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://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/>

State Contact

Jeanette B. Meyer
 Strengthening Families Georgia
 State Coordinator
 Prevent Child Abuse Georgia
 Jmeyer11@gsu.edu
 (678) 524-6141

This includes online and face-to-face training on the Protective Factors, technical assistance for existing and new partners, development of resources, and ongoing public awareness. SFG has served on the Georgia Essentials for Childhood (EfC) since 2013 and continues to participate by serving on the steering committee and programs workgroup. Additionally, SFG serves on the GA Family Support Network steering committee and several SFG partners are certified trainers in the national Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening and Support.

Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

We believe the future of Strengthening Families is in creating a new and more equitable normal for child and family serving organizations and systems, so that they see their work as building Protective Factors to reduce the potential for child maltreatment, to bolster resilience and mitigate the impact of traumatic events when they occur, and to create the best possible environments and communities for development of children and youth. We are committed to applying an intentional equity and racial justice lens to our work by:

- Acknowledging racism and inequities within the context of our organizational work
- Building objectives into our strategic plan for 2022-2027 that will focus on raising awareness and reducing racism at every level
- Seeking out experts to deliver workshops, keynotes, and trainings to educate communities and professionals who work with families

Ensuring Accountability

We are utilizing a developmental evaluation approach to provide the SFG Leadership Team with useful documentation for guiding policy, decision-making and implementation. This includes measuring changes, successes, barriers, and solutions which impact SFG's growth.

During FFY19, SFG evaluation consultants reviewed the current strategic plan and developed a new SFG Evaluation Plan to align with new SFG objectives. The new evaluation plan was guided by the SFG Evaluation Committee and includes an updated logic model, measurement model, and new data collection instruments.

Evolving Work

Georgia's Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan (CANNP), *A Vision for Child and Family Well-being in Georgia*, offers a comprehensive approach to supporting child and family health and well-being over the next ten years. Georgia's vision and goals promote a collective, strength-based approach that can help increase family assets, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. This approach is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building Protective Factors. SFG is involved in the plan implementation which envisions regional action plans that embed strengths-based strategies identified by families, providers and community leaders. <https://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/canpp/>

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