

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.

WHY SITES USING THE FSU *PARTNERS FOR A HEALTHY BABY* AND STATE STRENGTHENING FAMILIES™ EFFORTS SHOULD CONNECT

Strengthening Families efforts provide a cross-systems framework for family support and capacity building in more than 30 states. State initiatives are led by cross-system leadership teams generally representing a diverse set of disciplines, including early childhood, child abuse and neglect prevention, child welfare and public health. 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. Connecting to these leadership teams provides an opportunity to place the FSU *Partners for a Healthy Baby* work in the context of broad cross-disciplinary thinking about how to leverage existing systems to support families and prevent abuse and neglect.

At the programmatic level Strengthening Families provides a framework and set of tools to help any environment that supports young children and their families enhance their capacity to build protective factors that promote optimal development and prevent abuse and neglect. For home visiting programs using the FSU *Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum, Strengthening Families materials and tools can be used to help build a more comprehensive family support strategy that will complement existing work. Programs implementing the Strengthening Families approach in states may also be an important resource for anyone using FSU *Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum. These programs are already working with families in a strengths-based, capacity building way and may be an important resource to families who need additional supports.

Visit the Strengthening Families website (www.strengtheningfamilies.net) to learn more about efforts going on in specific states, or to download tools and resources to support Strengthening Families implementation within a program.



THE FSU PARTNERS FOR A HEALTHY BABY

Florida State University's (FSU's) *Partners for a Healthy Baby* is a popular intervention tool widely used by home visitors to strengthen the five protective factors of families by addressing the overall well-being of both the developing child and the family. This attractive five volume curriculum (*Before Baby Arrives*, *Baby's First Six Months*, *Baby's Months 7-12*, *Baby's Months 13-18* and *Toddler's Months 19-36*) includes magazine-style color handouts available in English or Spanish for families and gives the home visitor a platform from which to address challenging issues such as coping with depression, poverty and substance abuse.

For more information on the FSU *Partners for a Healthy Baby* home visiting curriculum and to view sample pages and handouts, visit the FSU Center's website today <http://cpeip.fsu.edu/PHB/>

HOW THE FSU *PARTNERS FOR A HEALTHY BABY* LINKS TO THE STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

The *FSU Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum is used nationally and internationally by more than 3,700 home visiting programs - including Healthy Start, Healthy Families and Early Head Start - to plan successful visits to expectant and parenting families. The Strengthening Families approach is evident throughout the research-based curriculum and guides the home visitor's work with vulnerable families to help them achieve personal goals and build protective factors for the well-being of their children.

Parental Resilience: The *FSU Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum provides home visitors with information to help parents identify their dreams and desires; recognize and lessen the effects of stress; build trusting relationships with their child and others; improve problem-solving skills; and anticipate and bounce back from the challenges of life.

Social Connections: The *FSU Partners* curriculum provides home visitors with information to help families expand their circle of support; address the challenges of co-parenting; deal with the unique issues faced by single parents; and learn the value of nurturing family and community relationships.

Concrete Support in Times of Need: The *FSU Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum provides home visitors with information to help families build the skills they need to manage their lives and deal with crises including getting their basic needs met and accessing help when faced with domestic violence, mental illness or substance abuse.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development: The *FSU Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum provides home visitors with information to help families understand and support their baby's growth and development -prenatally through age 3 - so they can reach their full potential.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children: The *FSU Partners for a Healthy Baby* curriculum provides home visitors with information to help families understand the importance of a healthy attachment between parents and their baby, which begins during pregnancy; and learn how being responsive, comforting and reassuring supports their baby's development of trust and emotional security.