

strengthening families

THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

What is Strengthening Families through Early Care & Education?

Strengthening Families is a new, proven, cost-effective strategy to prevent child abuse and neglect. The strategy involves early childhood centers working with families to build protective factors around children (see right). The Strengthening Families approach is based on:

- A review of existing research in the field of child abuse and neglect
- A national study that led to the identification of 21 exemplary programs across the country
- Conversations with hundreds of experts in the field, researchers, practitioners and parents

Implementation in Seven States

Strengthening Families through Early Care & Education initiatives are now being implemented in seven states: Alaska, Arkansas, Illinois, New Hampshire, Missouri, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin. In each state a leadership team that includes representatives from child welfare, early care and education, and a number of state partners is implementing the initiative. Each state is being supported through technical assistance from CSSP staff and a national network of technical assistance providers. Over two years (Jan. 1, 2005 - Dec. 31, 2006), partners will lay the foundation for work that is self-sustaining and institutionalized across systems.

What are the goals of the initiative?

- To increase awareness that strengthening families is central to quality child care
- To increase the number of early childhood programs that are working to prevent child abuse and neglect by building protective factors around children and families
- To improve working relationships among early childhood systems, child welfare systems, and child abuse prevention programs and initiatives
- To integrate prevention planning among state agencies with a family-centered approach that includes early childhood

How can I implement Strengthening Families in my state/program?

The CSSP website contains a host of materials, from self-assessment and implementation guides for programs to updates on strategies being pursued by pilot states. For more information visit www.cssp.org

Protective Factors

With support from the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**, the **Center for the Study of Social Policy** spent two years researching and identifying five protective factors that prevent child abuse and neglect. These are:

For adults:

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need

For children:

- Healthy social and emotional development

A number of tools are available for those who want to learn more about the protective factors approach.

- A literature review
- A self-assessment tool for early childhood programs organized around protective factors
- Handouts and descriptive tools on the protective factors

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Partners

Wisconsin's State Leadership Team includes:

- Children's Trust Fund
- Wisconsin Departments of: Health and Family Services, Workforce Development, and Public Instruction
- Child Abuse Prevention Fund and Child Protection Center of Children's Hospital and Health System
- Child Care Improvement Project
- Child Care Resource & Referral Network
- Child Welfare Training Partnership
- Children's Service Society of Wisconsin
- Early Childhood Collaborating Partners
- Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems
- Family resource centers
- Head Start Collaboration
- Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Association
- Parents
- Parents Plus of Wisconsin
- The Registry
- University of Wisconsin–Extension
- University of Wisconsin–Madison
- Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
- Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

Strengthening Families–Wisconsin, led by the Children's Trust Fund, is a collaboration of policymakers, practitioners, researchers, programs, and parents dedicated to reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect by improving the social and emotional development of children and strengthening the knowledge, resources, and social supports for families through a statewide system of high quality early care and education.

Wisconsin's Strengthening Families Agenda

- Stronger partnerships among early childhood education decision makers and their child protection and child abuse prevention counterparts.
- Enhanced collaboration among child abuse and neglect prevention advocates and programs and early childhood professionals and programs throughout the state.
- Enhanced education and professional development for child care providers to support them in delivering parent education and providing family support.
- Research-based evaluation model for assessing the effectiveness of collaboration between the child care and family support fields in strengthening families and preventing child maltreatment.

Exciting things happening right now:

- The Strengthening Families philosophy is being introduced to early care and education centers by trainers at the 16 Child Care Resource & Referral agencies throughout the state.
- As of September 2006, providers from 549 group child care centers (27% of the centers in Wisconsin) had been trained in Strengthening Families.
- 164 early care and education centers had completed the self-assessment by September 2006.
- 33 centers received mini-grants from Strengthening Families–Wisconsin in April 2006 to address weaknesses identified in their self-assessment, to improve their work with parents. Dozens of other centers have received mini-grants from local funds.
- County agencies, child care providers, and other community partners are exploring ways to enhance the relationships between child welfare and early care and education in five Wisconsin pilot counties.
- A professional development system is being designed to assure effective delivery of parent education and family support services in early care and education programs.