

Rhode Island: State Initiative Profile



Overview

Rhode Island joined the Strengthening Families™ initiative as one of the original pilot states in 2005. With implementation funding from the United Way of Rhode Island, Strengthening Families Rhode Island (SFRI) continued the collaboration of diverse stakeholders that developed *Successful Start*, the state's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems plan. The SFRI Leadership Team is comprised of representatives from the network of state departments that administer programs for young children, community-based agencies, child care providers, health care and mental health professionals, child advocates and parents.

SFRI trains, supports and guides child care and family support providers in their work with the parents of young children. The intent is to prepare the provider to be a strong competent mentor and coach for parents and other family members around issues of child development, parenting roles and responsibilities and discipline. The focus is on encouraging parent engagement and family involvement by facilitating positive supportive relationships between parents and providers.

Building Strengthening Families Practice on the Ground

SFRI works with a variety of providers, programs and partners to educate them about the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework and help them implement the principles and program strategies into their everyday practice. SFRI developed a two-tiered approach to supporting center-based early care and education providers. Tier I participants receive intensive technical assistance and professional development training over a five-month period. Centers receive one-to-one technical assistance for the completion and analysis of the Strengthening Families self-assessment and the development of an action plan for program enhancements and changes. The staff participates in a Core Protective Factors Training series. Tier II participants (including family child care providers) are offered discreet professional development opportunities on the Protective Factors through workshops and webinars.

SFRI works with the state Department of Children, Youth and Families and their community partners (Family Care Community Partnerships) that are providing family support services throughout Rhode Island. Programs are provided the Core Protective Factors Training Series and are offered technical assistance and support to complete the Strengthening Families self-assessment, and develop action plans for embedding Strengthening Families strategies into their practices.

Key Aspects of the State's Work

Policy / Systems Change

At the system level, SFRI has focused on ways to embed the Protective Factors Framework and Strengthening Families approach across disciplines and into existing

Strengthening Families is a research-based, 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 are also using the Strengthening Families approach to integrate state prevention strategies, strengthen families in the child welfare system and engage parents and communities in building protective factors. For more information, visit www.strengtheningfamilies.net

Nationally, Strengthening Families is coordinated by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) and supported by a number of national partner organizations including:

The National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds

The BUILD Initiative

United Way Worldwide

Zero to Three

The FRIENDS National Resource Center



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2009 QUICK FACTS

State Coordinator:
Kimberly Ash
SFRI Coordinator
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401-724*5850
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2005-2010 SF Investment:
Total: \$ 405,909
Direct Investment: \$ 285,909
Match: \$ 120,000

Programs reached:
* 23 ECE programs
* 12 Family Support programs

Children reached:
* 2425 children reached through
the ECE programs

Families reached:
* 2,259 families reached through
the ECE programs

* 19 Family outreach events and
activities took place in 2010

Professional Development:
* 2202 individuals trained
* 751 hours of training

Protective Factors used in ECCS
Planning: Yes

Protective Factors used in CBCAP
RFP/FCCP programs Process:
Yes

Protective Factors integrated into
state QRIS: No

CCR&R Network in state
supporting program
implementation in EC sector: No

early childhood systems. SFRI partners with the Rhode Island Family and Children's Trust Fund to foster awareness and use of the Strengthening Families approach statewide. A parent engagement logic model was developed to set the path for expanding the reach and breadth of the initial SFRI work. Working with early childhood education centers and family support programs, SFRI trains, supports and guides child care providers and family support providers in their work with the parents of young children.

Parent Partnerships

SFRI is partnering with parents in a variety of ways with the assistance and support of existing community partners including the Parent Support Network of Rhode Island, Parents As Teachers, the Rhode Island Parent Information Network and the four regional Family Care Community Partnerships. Together, these partners are providing parent resources, parent classes, family activities as well as parent empowerment and leadership opportunities. One such example is collaboration of SFRI and the Parent Support Network to implement and expand the Timebanks USA© in-kind reciprocity program in communities across the state.

Professional Development

SFRI developed and utilizes an eight session, 16-hour Core Protective Factors Training Series, two-hour workshops and one-hour webinar training sessions on a variety of topics related to the Protective Factors Framework, parent engagement and support, child abuse prevention and program strategies for implementing Strengthening Families. These professional development offerings are presented both on-site for centers and family support programs and as part of a Strengthening Families Rhode Island Training Calendar that is offered throughout the year.

Evaluating Strengthening Families

Brandeis University's The Heller School has studied SFRI on four different occasions and has provided SFRI with feedback and recommendations for furthering the work and engaging in continuous improvement efforts. Copies of the Brandeis studies are available upon request.

Evolving Work

SFRI continues to reach out to community partners, state agencies and families. The overarching goal is to introduce the Protective Factors Framework to all professionals and programs that work with young children and their families and to foster an awareness and motivation to embed the principles and strategies in their everyday work. SFRI and the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families are collaborating to integrate the SFRI approach and the Protective Factors Framework into multiple areas including child welfare staff development, foster care parent support, and high fidelity wrap around services.