

# California: State Initiative Profile



## Overview

California has been involved with Strengthening Families™ efforts since 2007, when more than 300 people attended the first Strengthening Families Leadership Summit. Since then, numerous agencies and organizations have been involved in the work, including the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), *Strategies*, the California Family Resource Association (CFRA), County First 5 California Commissions, the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services (LADCSF) and cross-sector prevention planning teams in Los Angeles. California is a county-administered state so much of the impetus for Strengthening Families has come from the grassroots and county levels. But in September 2010, state leaders formed the California Roundtable for Strengthening Families to explore implementing the Strengthening Families Protective Factors framework statewide.

## Building Strengthening Families Practice on the Ground

*Strategies*, a statewide capacity-building organization supported by the Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) in CDSS, supports efforts on the ground like those in Marin County where a collaborative of organizations are using the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment as part of their peer review process. The process involves site visits in which host and visiting organizations engage in peer sharing and relationship building (parents with parents, directors with directors, etc.) and tour the program sites. During the process, the organizations summarize their strengths, challenges and areas for improvement based on the self-assessment, and obtain input and recommendations from their peer site for ways they can support families in building the five Protective Factors.

## Key Aspects of the State's work

### Policy / Systems Change

At the statewide level, OCAP has integrated the Protective Factors framework into its funded statewide programs and grants. County First 5 Commissions, funded through tobacco tax revenue, play a pivotal role in funding programs that promote positive outcomes for children ages zero to five years. More than 15 County First 5's have integrated the Protective Factors framework into their funding, outcome reporting or professional development. The County of Los Angeles has integrated it into prevention planning efforts across the county with leadership from the LADCFCS, First 5 LA, Casey Family Programs and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health.

### Parent Partnerships

While efforts vary from county to county, a number of communities across California are hosting parent/community cafes to promote the five Protective Factors.

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](http://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

# California: State Initiative Profile



## 2009 QUICK FACTS

State Coordinators:  
Lee Ann Kelly  
Assistant Chief  
California Department of Social  
Services, Office of Child Abuse  
Prevention, Family and  
Community Support Services Unit  
744 P Street, MS 11-82  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Phone: 916-651-6578  
Email: [LeeAnn.Kelly@dss.ca.gov](mailto:LeeAnn.Kelly@dss.ca.gov)

Annette Marcus, MSW  
Statewide Prevention Director  
Strategies  
Youth for Change/Paradise Ridge  
FRC  
6249 Skyway  
Paradise, CA 95969  
Phone: 530-872-3896 ext 130  
Email:  
[amarcus@youth4change.org](mailto:amarcus@youth4change.org)

SF Investment: N/A

Programs reached: N/A

Families reached: N/A

Professional Development:  
852 individuals  
5,538 training hours

Protective Factors used in ECCS  
Planning: No

Protective Factors used in CBCAP  
RFP Process: Yes

Protective Factors integrated into  
state QRIS: No

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

## Professional Development

*Strategies* has provided 24 all-day Protective Factor trainings designed for front-line professionals in family strengthening organizations across the state and, along with OCAP, is planning the next statewide Child Abuse Prevention Summit, scheduled for September 2011. It will focus on the Protective Factors framework. Other professional development opportunities in the state have included an innovative program in Santa Barbara County in which the framework is included in the classes for mandated child abuse reporting.

## Evaluating Strengthening Families

Strengthening Families evaluation practices are emerging throughout California. For example, at the state level, OCAP is sponsoring a statewide assessment of child abuse and neglect prevention activities which, among other things, are exploring to what extent counties are integrating the Protective Factors into their prevention planning and collaboration. Ninety-one agencies (including tribal agencies) in 14 different counties are using the Family Development Matrix (FDM), developed by the Institute for Community Collaborative Studies at California State University Monterey Bay and funded by OCAP, to both help shape and evaluate their family support case management practice. The FDM incorporates the Protective Factors into its indicators and is a strength-based tool for measuring where a family is thriving as well as where it needs support. The Project also includes an evaluation component to gather data to assess it as a possible evidence-based practice.

## Evolving Work

The California Roundtable for Strengthening Families is at the beginning stages of assessing priorities. The group will be looking closely at each of the three levers of change (social policy, parent involvement and professional development) as key components in developing a statewide plan. The state Department of Maternal Child and Adolescent Health is considering using the Protective Factors framework to link a variety of evidence-based home visiting programs that they will administer. The California Network of Family Strengthening Networks (CNFSN) is currently developing a set of shared standards for family support practice that will align with both the Protective Factors and Family Support Principles.

Other California stakeholders are also beginning to look at ways to apply the Protective Factors framework across other settings and a wider age range. In Los Angeles for example, probation officers working with preteen and middle school children have begun to change some of their practices to align with the Protective Factors by including support to parents with young people on probation as a more core part of their work.