

Georgia: State Initiative Profile



Overview

In early 2006, the Governor's Office for Children and Families (GOCF) convened early childhood education and child abuse prevention stakeholders to develop a plan to utilize frontline early childhood caregivers as a means to prevent child abuse and neglect. The resulting Strengthening Families Georgia (SFG) initiative sought to embed the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors framework in Georgia's early care and learning system. The goals have since expanded to reach all systems, programs and services supporting families with young children. SFG administration is supported in part by the Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC) with funding by GOCF through the Federal Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant Program. Major partners include: GOCF, GAYC, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning; Georgia Department of Education (DOE); Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS); Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers (SA); Parent Leaders from Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers; Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) Georgia; United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta; Black Child Development Institute – Atlanta Affiliate; Georgia Family Connection Partnership; Head Start Collaboration Office; Annie E. Casey Foundation; Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB), Georgia Parents as Teachers and others.

Building Strengthening Families Practice on the Ground

SFG is reaching child care programs through training systems and contract requirements that address the Protective Factors. Also, United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta is part of a six-site pilot through United Way Worldwide to weave Strengthening Families concepts throughout all early childhood activities taking place at the pilot sites. Strategies from the six sites will be implemented in local United Ways across the country upon the pilot's completion.

Key Aspects of the State's work

Policy / Systems Change

By building Strengthening Families concepts and Protective Factors information into training for child care consultants, the regulatory system for child care is transforming into one of consultation and support rather than inspection and compliance monitoring.

SFG is developing a collaborative relationship between Bright from the Start and the state Department of Human Services to align departmental priorities to prevent maltreatment and promote optimal development of all children. Goals include ensuring that young children in foster care are enrolled in quality early care and education programs; providing continuity of educational placements for children involved with the child welfare system; embedding Strengthening Families concepts into child welfare practices and policies and training caseworkers, supervisors and foster care parents in the Strengthening Families approach. SFG has produced a mandated reporter video

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:
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Georgia
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SF Investment:
Total: \$152,450
Direct Investment: \$59,950
Match: \$92,500

Programs reached:
76 early care and education
programs

Children reached:
N/A

Professional Development:
of individuals trained: 2,064

Protective Factors used in
ECCS Planning: Yes

Protective Factors used in
CBCAP RFP Process: Yes

Protective Factors integrated
into state QRIS: N/A

CCR&R Network in state
supporting program
implementation in EC sector:
Yes

on child abuse for state-approved child care trainers that incorporate the Protective Factors.

Parent Partnerships

Parent leaders have been involved in Georgia's Strengthening Families initiative from its inception, serving on the Leadership Team and participating in a parent partnership workgroup charged with increasing parent leadership in the state. In 2009, the workgroup began reaching families across the state using family-friendly language and "Parent Cafés." In October 2009, SFG held the first Georgia Family Forum in Atlanta and at four local sites across the state simultaneously. More than 275 parents and professionals registered to attend.

Professional Development

The Georgia Training Institute at Sheltering Arms has developed and delivers several trainings on the Protective Factors and Strengthening Families for early childhood providers. SFG uses its close connection with state early childhood systems to infuse Protective Factors information into child care train-the-trainers offered through child care resource and referral organizations, Bright from the Start, and Sheltering Arms.

Evaluating Strengthening Families

SFG plans to develop a tracking system to measure the diffusion of Strengthening Families concepts in trainings and to assess the resulting changes in attitudes and behaviors of professionals and paraprofessionals. In 2010, SFG added an evaluation work group to ensure that essential data is collected in order to evaluate all SFG activities.

Evolving Work

SFG continues to identify resources to sustain the initiative over the long-term. The leadership team will work on increasing SFG's visibility, showing how the Protective Factors framework is being integrated into services and support and linking SFG with emerging statewide early childhood initiatives.