

Idaho: State Initiative Profile



Overview

The Idaho Children's Trust Fund and the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children began working on the Idaho Strengthening Families Initiative in 2006. With a grant from the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds, Idaho developed a plan to embed the five protective factors into the state's early care and education system. As a first step, the state incorporated the Strengthening Families protective factors training curriculum for child care providers into the Idaho's Quality Rating and Improvement System in early 2010.

Building Strengthening Families Practice on the Ground

In the 2009 and 2010 grant cycles, the Idaho Children's Trust Fund required all grantees to demonstrate how they are building protective factors into their work. Fourteen programs participated in the last funding cycle, with total funding of \$100,000. Due to less robust revenues in 2010, funding the in next cycle will be closer to \$60,000. The funded programs focus on parenting education, parent leadership, home visiting, community awareness, and child sexual abuse. The Idaho Trust Fund provides ongoing training and technical assistance, including a Strengthening Families Training Institute that brings in best practices from around the country. The Idaho Trust Fund has also shared its Strengthening Families training curriculum with New Jersey, Georgia, and South Carolina.

Key Aspects of the State's work

In the child care arena, Idaho is engaging all of the levers of change. As efforts diversify into other areas, however, this may become more challenging.

Policy / Systems Change

Strengthening Families is now embedded into the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System. This has institutionalized the protective factors as a key aspect of child care quality. Based on the experience of programs that have already implemented the training curriculum, Idaho expects to see changes throughout the system as more child care programs join the QRIS. Deepening Strengthening Families within the early childhood system is a critical aspect of the state strategy. At the same time, Idaho is broadening its efforts through a Strengthening Families Roundtable that involves Head Start programs, adult and juvenile corrections, some divisions of the Department of Health and Welfare, children's mental health and a variety of anti-poverty organizations including Catholic Charities.

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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SF Investment: \$260,000

Programs reached: 16

Children reached: N/A

Professional Development:
455 individuals trained
7,735 person/hours training

Protective Factors used in
ECCS Planning: No

Protective Factors used in
CBCAP RFP Process: Yes

Protective Factors integrated
into state QRIS: Yes

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

Parent Partnerships

The Idaho Trust Fund has trained facilitators and funded projects to build parent leadership predominantly using the community café process. Idaho will continue to forge ahead in this area.

Professional Development

Idaho's QRIS was developed to support IdahoSTARS, the state's child care professional development system. IdahoSTARS includes a specialization in Strengthening Families, and courses in Early Childhood at the College of Western Idaho are incorporating Strengthening Families.

Idaho is a state in which "outside of government" solutions tend to gain the most traction. The QRIS is built through the Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC) which contracts for federal funding through a state agency. Incentives, rather than regulation, guide the process. Funding for quality child care is contracted out to the Idaho AEYC, which has greater latitude to support innovative efforts than might the state agency. An important driver, though, is a strong relationship between Idaho AEYC and the state child care administrator.

Evaluating Strengthening Families

While Idaho designed an evaluation project based on field surveys, funding has not been sufficient to implement it. However, Idaho AEYC is embarking on a five-year research project on the newly implemented QRIS with the University of Idaho that will evaluate all of the quality standards, including Strengthening Families. Beginning this year, the Idaho Trust Fund is training its grantees on the use of the Protective Factors Survey and asking them to use it to evaluate their programs to establish more consistent measurement of outcomes.

Evolving Work

In the near future, Strengthening Families Idaho will focus with more intent on engaging a broader network of partners through the Strengthening Families Roundtable. A roundtable leadership group is developing an action plan for promoting cross-systems work among participating organizations and agencies using the protective factors as a frame.