

Oklahoma: State Initiative Profile



Overview

Oklahoma launched Strengthening Families™ in seven pilot communities in 2007 to provide concrete supports to families through early childhood programs. The *Oklahoma Strengthening Families* initiative provides training and structure for program staff to better support families and children in their times of need; and, to help families and program staff build Protective Factors that reduce the likelihood of adverse home and care environments. Key partners include the Oklahoma State Department of Health as lead agency, the Smart Start Oklahoma (Oklahoma's state early childhood advisory council), the Department of Human Services and Smart Start Communities.

Building Strengthening Families Practice on the Ground

The goals of *Oklahoma Strengthening Families* are to

- Improve parents' knowledge of parenting and child development, expand parents' social support circle and increase parents' access to community resources
- Improve the early childhood program environment in order to better facilitate positive provider-to-child interactions, provider-to-parent interactions and parent-to-parent interactions

With a training grant from Zero to Three, Oklahoma trained 40 early care and education professionals across the state in the Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect (PCAN) Parent –Provider Partnership curriculum.

Initially, five child care sites in each of the pilot communities participated in the initiative. Today, efforts have expanded to other programs and events in the communities. Activities include school readiness efforts, parent training, parent cafes and community-wide events that focus on the Strengthening Families Protective Factors.

Key Aspects of the State's work

Policy / Systems Change

Oklahoma has embedded the Strengthening Families Protective Factors framework in the state's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant, the Smart Start Initiative and the State Plan for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

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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Oklahoma State Department of
Health
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1299
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SF Investment: N/A

Programs reached: N/A

Children reached: N/A

Professional Development: 75
individuals; 125 hours

Protective Factors used in
ECCS Planning: Yes

Protective Factors used in
CBCAP RFP Process: No

Protective Factors integrated
into state QRIS: N/A

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

Evaluating Strengthening Families

Oklahoma has recently received a grant from the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds to evaluate the community impact of Strengthening Families. The evaluation will investigate the necessary "ingredients" for a successful community-level initiative and the impact it has. Through this effort, Oklahoma will construct a toolkit about the "how-tos" of starting Strengthening Families efforts at the community level. The final analysis will be completed by late spring 2011.

Evolving Work

Preliminary discussions are underway about expanding Strengthening Families to other communities in Oklahoma. The evaluation that is in progress will inform these and other decisions about the initiative's future directions.