

# Pennsylvania: State Initiative Profile



## Overview

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning is coordinating efforts to embed or expand the Strengthening Families™ (SF) framework into all child and family service systems in Pennsylvania. Other agencies joining the work are: Head Start, Community Engagement, Early Childhood Mental Health, Parent Liaison to the State, Office of Children, Youth and Families, Office of Mental Health, Pennsylvania Parent Information Resource Center, Pennsylvania Department of Education, South Central Regional Key, Pottstown School District, United Way, and Parent Teacher Organization.

Strengthening Families aligns with:

- The Child Welfare system's priorities of safety, permanency, and well being of children.
- The CASSP principles within the children's mental health system.
- The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), Pennsylvania Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC), and the Department of Education's focus on parent engagement.

Pennsylvania's Strengthening Families work began when the Children's Trust Fund board president scheduled an initial Strengthening Families Leadership Team meeting in September of 2006. The goal was to encourage participation in the national SF network. After the 2006 meeting, the leadership team convened again in September 2008 with assistance from the National Alliance of Children's Trust Funds who presented the national perspective. After this meeting, the team continued to meet consistently and in June 2008 a state coordinator was appointed.

## Building Strengthening Families Practice on the Ground

The Southeast Regional Key has trained 40 professionals in the PCAN curriculum and provided on-site technical assistance to early childhood programs. These trainers touched more than 46 centers reaching 6,383 children. In 2009, 226 child care professional development instructors in the early childhood field were trained in the Strengthening Families Protective Factors. The instructors have provided trainings to more than 24 centers reaching over 4,000 children.

## Key Aspects of the State's work

### Policy / Systems change

The Children's Trust Fund Request for Applications (RFAs) began including the requirement that grantees incorporate the SF framework into their funded projects in 2006.

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



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## 2009 QUICK FACTS

State Coordinator:  
Carrie L. Collins  
Family Support Program  
Manager  
Departments of Public Welfare  
and Education  
Office of Child Development  
and Early Learning  
Email: [ccollins@pa.gov](mailto:ccollins@pa.gov)  
Phone: [717.705.2910](tel:717.705.2910)

SF Investment:  
Total: \$205,000

Direct Investment:  
\$175,000.00

\$25,000 PIRC and  
National Alliance

\$150,000 CTF grantee,  
SE Reg. Key

Match: \$30,000 CTF funding  
for additional trainings

Children reached:  
10,383+

Professional Development:  
480 individuals trained  
2097 person/hours training

Protective Factors used in  
ECCS Planning: No

Protective Factors used in  
CBCAP RFP Process: No

Protective Factors integrated  
into state QRIS: Yes

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

## Parent Partnerships

This work is just beginning and will be a focus for the Leadership Team in 2010-2011.

## Professional Development

For the past several years the main priority of the SF Leadership Team has been to embed and infuse the SF Protective Factors approach to preventing child abuse and neglect into organizations that deal with families and young children. The SF Leadership Team has presented SF101 to numerous groups around the state, Zero to Three provided training on the PCAN Curriculum, and there have been six hour training of trainers for instructors in the early childhood professional development statewide system. Moving forward, Pennsylvania will continue to reach out to other organizations dealing with young children and their families and will refine trainings to include child welfare staff, higher education staff and school district personnel.

The coordination of the SF efforts lies within the state's system for early childhood programs, The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). OCDEL was formed by a unification of early childhood programs formerly housed within the PA Department of Public Welfare and the PA Department of Education. The placement of the Strengthening Families efforts within OCDEL provides ready access to QRIS revisions, Family Support Programs and the professional development system for Early Childhood education.

## Evaluating Strengthening Families

The instructors who received training in the Strengthening Families Protective Factors complete an on-line report after they provide a workshop within their local region. The results are compiled and shared with the Leadership Team.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/3LBSRV7>

Ongoing evaluation efforts will include obtaining feedback from those organizations who received on-site support from instructors who attended the PCAN Curriculum training.

## Evolving Work

The Leadership Team supports adapting trainings to different audiences, such as child welfare, higher education and the K-12 educational system. The team is pursuing the Community Café model to gather a deeper, richer community and parent voice and is developing a Strengthening Families transition plan for the new administration.