

Tennessee: State Initiative Profile



Overview

In 2006, the Tennessee Children's Trust Fund in the Department of Children's Services joined the Strengthening Families Learning Community and began working with the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCR&R) to integrate Strengthening Families into Tennessee's early care system. Other key partners include the Head Start Collaboration Office, the Early Childhood Comprehensive Services planning team, the Governor's Office of Children's Care Coordination, the state Commission on Children and Youth, Department of Education, Parents as Teachers, Tennessee Center for Child Welfare, University of Tennessee Extension Agency, Tennessee United Way, Vanderbilt University's Center on Social/Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee and the University of Tennessee Social Work Office of Research & Public Service (UT-SWORPS).

Building Strengthening Families Practice on the Ground

Tennessee has the unique capacity to train and support all child care providers interested in participating in Strengthening Families. DHS appropriated funding for a Strengthening Families Network Coordinator within the CCR&R. There are 10 CCR&R offices across Tennessee, each providing free training and technical assistance to child care providers to improve the quality of child care. The agency also helps parents to find child care providers in their area. Funding also supports a Parenting Liaison in each CCR&R office who delivers Strengthening Families workshops to providers. The Parenting Liaisons also deliver Targeted Technical Assistance (TTA) to child care directors, direct caregiver staff and owner/operators of family and group homes on completing the Strengthening Families self-assessment, making a plan for implementation and assisting the child care agency in becoming a recognized site. TTA work qualifies as required licensing hours for providers. The Parenting Liaisons also work with numerous community agencies serving children, families and teen parents and also collaborate with the Department of Children's Services on Community Advisory Boards, which are required in all counties.

DHS invests a minimum of \$800,000 yearly in salaries, travel, supplies and other resources. The Department of Children's Services allocates \$1.85 million in federal Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds to local programs. Local grantees are required to demonstrate how their work supports the protective factors in families.

Key Aspects of the State's work

Policy / Systems change

Work continues to incorporate Strengthening Families as a major part of the Parent/Family Involvement component of Tennessee's annual Child Care Evaluation

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

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SF Investment:

Total: \$3,120,000

Direct: \$2,750,000
Match: \$370,000

Programs reached:
69 actively involved

Children reached:
3,670 children

Professional Development:
3,319 individuals trained
6,734 hours of 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

and Report Card Program and Star Quality Program. Other work includes embedding this work in all systems serving child care providers, child welfare staff, pre-school and early intervention parents and children. Home visiting programs are also using Strengthening Families as a unifying principle.

Parent Partnerships

Training in community cafes across the state is another innovative and growing way to begin parent leadership and community outreach. Tennessee has developed a "Parents Know Children Grow" website and Facebook fan page. These tools, along with the CCR&R website will help inform parents about the protective factors. Tennessee is also promoting parent leadership through initiatives with Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee, home visitation programs, Parents as Teachers, University of Tennessee extension parent outreach and various teen parenting programs.

Professional Development

Professional development continues through partnerships with the Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA), which provides a free 30-hour orientation for all providers and free academic classes leading to the Child Development Associate (CDA) designation, to which the Strengthening Families protective factors are cross walked. There are also plans to introduce Strengthening Families in early childhood bachelors degree classes.

ZERO TO THREE will come to Tennessee in 2011 to train 40 CCR&R staff on the Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect curriculum. Those individuals will use this training to enhance professional development with a focus on Strengthening Families.

Evaluating Strengthening Families

Under contract with the Department of Human Services, UT-SWORPS is in the final year of a three-year evaluation of Strengthening Families implementation and outcomes in Tennessee. Early findings indicate that Tennessee has built a strong collaborative and embedded Strengthening Families and the protective factors into the everyday practice of early care providers. In the final year of the evaluation, UT-SWORPS will assess the extent that providers using this approach have an impact on children and their families.

Evolving Work

Tennessee is planning to continue its outreach to child care providers and seeks to spread community cafes across the state as a strategy to engage and support parent leaders. Efforts will continue to build a close working relationship with the child welfare system to promote the use of quality child care for children in care or at risk.