

STATE STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

States have used several approaches to infuse Strengthening Families™ strategies in early care and education:

- Piloting exemplary programs that can model best practices
- Giving mini-grants to support the work
- Connecting centers through learning networks

	Exemplary Programs	Mini-Grants	Learning Networks	Other
Alaska	5 pilot sites chosen to reflect programmatic, geographic and demographic diversity	Mini-grants of \$10,000 given to each pilot site for program implementation	3 face-to-face meetings of all pilots and then monthly phone calls	
Arkansas	6 Promising Practice Programs (PPPs) chosen through a competitive application	15 additional programs are part of the learning network	Monthly calls promote cross-network sharing	
Illinois	6 network hub programs chosen for their ability to convene and coordinate TA to other programs in their geographic area	Hub sites received grants of \$24,000 to defray costs related to staffing and hosting the network	Each hub site coordinates a learning network of between 6 and 10 additional programs	State has a strong communications agenda to educate and engage ECE programs in Strengthening Families. Tools include a website, fact sheets, posters and calendars.
Missouri	6 pilot sites chosen out of 57 filling out the self-assessment	Pilot sites were awarded \$5,000 grants to support their action plans		
New Hampshire	10 exemplar sites chosen through competitive applications	Pilot sites met monthly; 70 additional programs participated in the learning network		Practicum students from participating colleges and through TANF's child care solutions supported learning network site's use of the self-assessment Exemplar site mentoring of local programs is planned

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	Exemplary Programs	Mini-Grants	Learning Networks	Other
Rhode Island		14 Tier I program sites received intensive technical assistance on completing the self-assessment & developing action plans, chosen in part based on location for a community-based approach	Tier II is open to any ECE program and consists of basic training on the SFI approach and protective factors framework and opportunities to participate in on-line communications	
Wisconsin		Competitive mini-grants were awarded based on the self-assessment action plans submitted; 186 programs, or 9% of all ECE centers in the state, completed the self-assessment and 51 received mini-grants of less than \$1,000		CCR&Rs in each region provided Strengthening Families training and support and technical assistance for programs completing the self-assessment

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Alaska

Strengthening Families Alaska focused on five pilot sites that differed in program style, size, population and region, hoping to learn from them how to apply the initiative broadly and in varied settings. Teams from the pilot programs gathered initially for Strengthening Families training, self-assessment and information sharing to prepare for developing action plans. Two additional face-to-face trainings were held approximately six months apart. For more frequent follow-up and support, Strengthening Families co-leaders and pilot sites established a “learning network” of monthly conference calls centered on protective factors, family support issues and resources. Program staff gave updates, shared information on successful strategies, and engaged in problem solving. The learning network kept program directors energized and engaged in Strengthening Families. Mini-grants of \$10,000 were given to pilot sites for program implementation, and a contractor was hired to prepare materials, research resources and facilitate the monthly conference calls.

Expansion Plan

Pilot sites are prepared to provide education and support to other programs implementing the approach. Additionally, five center-based programs from the Anchorage area have been identified as a second Strengthening Families cadre, initiating their work in May 2007. These programs were intentionally limited to the Anchorage area as part of a strategy to increase the penetration and influence of Strengthening Families centers in a specific geographical area.

Arkansas

Strengthening Families Arkansas chose six promising practice programs (PPPs) through a competitive application process. Pilot sites represent a continuum of providers — centers and family daycare homes, rural and urban settings, and faith-based programs and public pre-K programs. They exhibit strong local associations with child welfare, strong parent involvement, and cultural inclusiveness. Another 15 programs are participating in a larger learning network. Monthly conference calls support deepening implementation of Strengthening Families in PPPs and in other network programs. For example, through presentations to early education program administrators and directors, and at children’s program administrator certificate training, Strengthening Families is encouraging additional programs to join the network.

Expansion Plan

Strengthening Families Arkansas has integrated the Strengthening Families self-assessment in the state’s soon-to-be-adopted quality rating system for early childhood programs. Once the rating system is implemented, it will expand the Arkansas Strengthening Families network from the approximately 20 programs currently participating to include all programs seeking to be known as high-quality programs.

strengthening families

THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

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
- Children’s healthy social and emotional development

Through the Strengthening Families Initiative, more than thirty states are shifting policy, funding and training to help early childhood providers 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 cssp.org/doris_duke

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Illinois

In each of the six Department of Children and Family Services regions in the state, Strengthening Families Illinois activated a “learning network and hub” for integrating the initiative into early childhood programs. Programs selected as pilot participants in the learning network conducted Strengthening Families self-assessments and developed action plans. One program in each network functions as the designated “hub” for communicating intra-network, coordinating network activities, convening and facilitating network meetings, leading in plan development and implementation, promoting and facilitating training, and serving as a liaison to other hubs and to the statewide project and leadership team. Each hub program receives a grant of \$24,000 to help support the costs associated with coordinating the network. Of this, \$15,000 is intended to support the salary of a part-time hub coordinator or other staffing costs associated with coordinating the network, and \$9,000 is intended for network expenses such as pay for substitutes so staff can attend meetings, incentives for network participation, and food- and meeting-related costs. Illinois’ approach consists of employing the Strengthening Families program self-assessment and action plan, monthly peer-to-peer technical assistance and support, and the “training of trainers” model of staff development. There are approximately 60 participating early childhood programs, and two networks of family daycare providers also are participating in the initiative. A multi-site agency has formed an in-house learning network on site. For more information on Illinois’ approach, see [Replicating a National Model](#).

Expansion Plans

Strengthening Families Illinois has found those working in the field to be strongly interested in participating in the initiative and already demanding that the program expands. Five additional coalitions and networks interested in the Strengthening Families Initiative have received Strengthening Families Illinois materials, technical assistance, and invitations to send representatives to trainings. Three hubs are expanding their capacity to become regional Strengthening Families Illinois training centers.

Missouri

The state leadership team chose six pilot programs from the 57 programs that completed the self-assessment and Strengthening Families application process. The involvement of a contractor-facilitator and of Missouri’s Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) network ensure quality in Strengthening Families content across all sites. Mini-grants of \$5,000 will be available to each pilot site for implementation, and they will receive training in *Partnering with Parents: Preventing Abuse and Neglect*. Peer networking will be established.

ALASKA

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ARKANSAS

Pilot sites represent a continuum of providers — centers and family daycare homes, rural and urban settings, and faith-based programs and public pre-K programs.

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Expansion Plans

Local teams consisting of a range of professionals for cross-training and to support childcare programs are being organized for each pilot site. Expansion in the St. Louis metropolitan area will be spearheaded by Vision for Children at Risk.

New Hampshire

Ten Strengthening Families “exemplar programs” were selected based on a competitive application process. In order to be considered, programs needed to submit a cover letter making the case for the program’s inclusion, a completed self-assessment, and letters of support from parents, staff and community partners. The exemplar programs met monthly through the first half of 2006 and their directors became avid consumers of DHHS-sponsored professional development activities and advocates for ECE at the state level. An additional 70 programs have engaged in a broader learning network, and 27 programs are participating as placements for practicum students from a community college. The programs complete the self-assessment and implement at least one improvement in which the student can participate. Seventeen childcare programs received Strengthening Families orientation through TANF Child Care Solutions, a pilot program for matching TANF recipients interested in childcare careers with three-month internships in childcare programs. Consultation to ECE programs on child development was secured through a Child Development Bureau contract with a consultant.

Expansion Plans

It is envisioned that all exemplar programs will provide mentorship to other local programs. Additionally, New Hampshire’s RFP for FY 2008-2012 requires all 10 CCR&R agencies to provide Strengthening Families training and mentorship to ECE programs in their region.

Rhode Island

Strengthening Families Rhode Island adopted a **two-tiered approach**. Tier I is intensive facilitated work with a core of 14 programs located in Washington County and Woonsocket, RI. Each program within Tier I receives intensive on-site technical assistance related to completing the Strengthening Families self-assessment and developing an individual program action plan for change and program enhancements — including identifying professional development opportunities and physical plant enhancements. Staff within Tier I programs are required to participate in an eight-session training series focusing on the protective factors framework.

Tier II is open to any early care education care center that is interested. Tier II programs receive basic training on the Strengthening Families approach and are introduced to the protective factors framework. The basic training gives an overview of

NEW HAMPSHIRE

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RHODE ISLAND

This state adopted a two-tiered approach: Each program within Tier I receives intensive on-site technical assistance related to completing the Strengthening Families self-assessment and developing an individual program action plan. Tier II is open to any early care education care center

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the self-assessment tool and recommendations for developing an individual center action plan. Tier II programs are linked with other participating programs in both Tiers for shared learning through on-line communication and invitations to community training sessions. They have access to all Strengthening Families benefits except on-site guidance and TA.

Expansion Plans

Strengthening Families orientation has been provided for the DHS Office of Child Care Comprehensive Services (Comp Services) and to the DHS/DOH Child Care Support Network (CCSN). Comp Services sites not already implementing Strengthening Families will become Tier II sites. CCSN implementation is pending.

Wisconsin

Rather than working with a small group of pilot centers, Strengthening Families Wisconsin focused on reaching a large number of programs statewide, both in terms of raising awareness and changing practice. The state's Strengthening Families Initiative used mini-grants as an incentive to encourage centers to complete the self-assessment. After completing their self-assessments, centers were eligible to apply for mini-grants at the state and/or local level to help them address weak areas identified in their self-assessments. At the state level, \$35,000 was made available for mini-grants in spring 2006, and 122 centers applied. Grants were given to 33 agencies operating 51 centers, with a maximum grant award of \$1,000 per center. (See Appendix 4 for a full description of the statewide mini-grant process, and Appendix 5 for a summary of mini-grant recipients' final reports on their progress.) Following the success of the statewide mini-grants as an incentive for centers to complete the self-assessment and change their practice, local mini-grant processes were initiated in at least six communities, using funds from a variety of sources. A total of \$43,700 was made available for local mini-grants around the state in 2006. Child care resource and referral agencies across the state — which had been trained to play a role in educating, training and supporting regional centers in implementing Strengthening Families — supported local programs in their efforts to implement the initiative.

Expansion Plan

In 2005-2006, CCR&R agencies were reimbursed with state funds based on the number of centers they reached in their service delivery area. In 2007, many CCR&Rs continue to provide training and encourage centers to complete the self-assessment, although they are no longer receiving funding from the state to do so. To support that momentum, CTF is currently developing a new training that will be available for CCR&Rs, family resource centers, UW-Extension agents and educators, and any other trainers who wish to use it to continue to train ECE providers and others in Strengthening Families and the protective factors.

WISCONSIN

This state focused on engaging a large number of programs in both raising awareness and changing practice. They used mini-grants as an incentive to encourage centers to complete the self-assessment.