

# strengthening families

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LEADERSHIP SUMMIT • May 10-12, 2007 • San Diego

**Dear Partner in Strengthening Families,**

**Thank you** for making the Strengthening Families Leadership Summit the success we hoped it would be! Thirty-three states were represented at the Summit, along with a host of national partner organizations. Our task is to continue to grow these numbers by sustaining our commitment to and belief in the capacity of all families to nurture and care for their children. Because of you and your many colleagues and partners, every day, the Strengthening Families Initiative makes strides that impact growing numbers of children and their families.

This letter will recap some of what we learned during the Summit and from your evaluations (we had a great return rate!). In addition, we have Summit “mementos” for you: a slide show complete with photos, colorful drawings capturing the main themes of the plenary sessions from Timothy Corey, and select speaker slides. To view them, visit [www.cssp.org/sfsummit/](http://www.cssp.org/sfsummit/)

## **What We Heard**

**“The voices of parents were exhilarating, substantive, and insightful!”**

Parents’ participation and contributions showed that their involvement can and should happen everywhere—in state leadership teams and early care and education programs, through Parent Cafés and parent-led training. All of us now have an obligation to make parent engagement at all levels of Strengthening Families happen!

**“We want more, more, more tools!”**

We hope the CD that you received at the Summit, **Strengthening Families: Tools and Guidance for States**, is a good start toward meeting this need. But we aren’t stopping there! Using lessons learned from you and your partners, we’re building an electronic library as part of the emerging Strengthening Families National Network. Keep an eye on [www.cssp.org](http://www.cssp.org) for upcoming information.

**“Strengthening Families 101 is important!”**

Many attendees were relatively new to Strengthening Families and wanted a “just the facts” workshop to help them better understand the basic tenets and strategies of the initiative. We plan to start future Summits with a Strengthening Families 101 workshop, augmenting the Strengthening Families CD and materials on the website with hands-on training.

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## **“Connections and re-connections made the day!”**

Opportunities to talk together—in working sessions or at receptions and meals—brought new insights, continued relationships, and shared work and peer coaching. Attendees also said it was just plain fun being with others who shared their values and interests. You already know how important relationships are to Strengthening Families! So let’s all commit to ensuring that our get-togethers—national, state, and local—offer times for sharing and peer learning. We are so much stronger when we see each other as key assets for sustaining the work.

## **“Policy change is the lynchpin to sustainability!”**

The Summit made clear that to sustain Strengthening Families in the long term, we can and must enact policies that enhance professional development, quality rating scales for child care centers, training, funding streams, accreditation standards, and parent leadership in decision making. With each election, with each new change in leadership in the public sector, corporations, and philanthropies, it’s incumbent upon us to make the case for Strengthening Families through our materials, our actions, and our results.

## **“We have to mount the evidence that Strengthening Families works!”**

Mustering results—evaluating our work—was mentioned often at the Summit as a tough issue, one requiring partnership among national, state, and local partners. And many of you said philanthropic and academic resources could be used well to create new ways to gather evidence—methods that are community-based, informed by consumers’ perspectives, and based on asset development rather than risk assessment. This complex issue is worthy of our best thinking and most energetic alliance. Look for the Strengthening Families National Network to activate a peer learning process so that the good results we’re seeing are translated into accepted measures of success.

## **Where We’re Heading**

In the next few months, with your help, we will launch the Strengthening Families National Network, releasing an electronic library of tools to expedite and deepen Strengthening Families knowledge and implementation. The Network will be as strong as our relationships with you in the field who are doing the work of Strengthening Families in child care centers, child welfare offices, state offices, training institutions, national partner agencies, churches, and communities around the country. So stay connected, keep pushing the envelop, and keep that stone soup brewing!

Best wishes in the work ahead,

*Judy Langford*

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