



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES FLORIDA: STATE PROFILE

Infrastructure

Florida launched its Strengthening Families™ initiative in July 2010. Under direction from the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection (OACP), the initiative focuses on multi-agency and organizational systems change. More than two dozen entities are involved, including the Agency for Health Care Administration; Office of Early Learning; the Departments of Children and Families, Education, Health and Law Enforcement; the Head Start State Collaboration Office; the Lawton Chiles Foundation; local law enforcement; and the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida.

Florida's five-year child abuse prevention and permanency plan includes goals to infuse the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework into systems that serve parents and children. The plan for prevention of child abuse, abandonment and neglect establishes specific targets to incorporate the protective factors as a foundation for work within the early education and care system, home-visiting programs, Head Start programs and Florida's Medicaid Child Health Check-Up Program by 2015. In addition, Florida will provide assistance to judicial circuits seeking to incorporate the protective factors within local prevention services and systems. Finally, the state will provide information and resources to promote and build efforts by faith-based and community-based organizations to build protective factors through family and community supports. The plans for permanency (i.e., adoption promotion and support of adoptive families) establish specific targets to incorporate the protective factors within and after the adoption process.

OACP intentionally created Florida's Strengthening Families initiative to be implemented throughout multiple existing agencies and service delivery models on the state and local levels. Because a large number of agencies and organizations are responsible for a portion of the initiative, it can be easily maintained statewide and long term.

Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

Training is provided by the membership of the Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Advisory Council; each of the participating agencies and organizations contribute materials and staff time.

The state's home visiting coalition has worked to educate all of its members and other programs with a component of home visiting about Strengthening Families, the protective factors and their relevance to programs that provide home visiting services.

Strengthening Families

Strengthening Families™ is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs and communities in building 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

Using the Strengthening Families framework, more than 30 states are shifting policy and practice to help programs working with children and families focus on protective factors. States apply the Strengthening Families approach in early childhood, child welfare, child abuse prevention and other child and family serving systems.

Nationally, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) coordinates Strengthening Families and works with more than a dozen national partner organizations to create a new vision in which communities, families, institutions, service systems and organizations:

- Focus on protective and promotive factors
- Recognize and support parents as decision-makers and leaders
- Value the culture and unique assets of each family
- Are mutually responsible for better outcomes for children, youth and families

For more information, visit www.strengtheningfamilies.net.



FLORIDA

strengthening families™

A PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

Implementation Checklist

Protective Factors used in Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems or other early childhood systems planning	✓
Protective Factors used in Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention RFP Process	
Protective Factors integrated into state Quality Rating and Improvement System	
Child Care Resource & Referral Network in state supporting program implementation	
Strengthening Families included in State Home Visiting Plan	✓
Strengthening Families is being implemented into child welfare system	✓

State Coordinators

Zackary Gibson, Director
Office of Adoption and Child Protection,
Executive Office of the Governor
(850) 717-9261
cyndee.odom@eog.myflorida.com

Christina Pacelle, Special Projects Manager
Office of Adoption and Child Protection,
Executive Office of the Governor
(850) 717-9261
christina.pacelle@eog.myflorida.com

Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

The state's initiatives are not single program or local-level projects. Instead, they focus on systems change across as many delivery systems as are feasible without directed funding for these efforts. The state's plan is ambitious and includes a broad range of foci including: early education and care; home visiting; Head Start; Whole Child; Healthy Families Florida; Healthy Start; education services for parents and caregivers of newborns; faith-based and community-based efforts; public awareness and education; evidence-based parenting programs; child death review; PreK-12 education; law enforcement; recruitment, training, education and support of adoptive parents and professionals; customer service; and monitoring and evaluation.

While Florida's efforts focus on systems change, these efforts will ultimately impact programs and services on the ground. For example, Florida's 20 judicial circuits are each tasked with developing local prevention and permanency plans for their region. OACP facilitates a learning community of key local leadership that meets monthly via conference call. OACP has also facilitated technical assistance and knowledge-building work with the judicial circuits to support their ability to build the protective factors into their prevention and permanency plans.

The state's home visiting coalition developed and field-tested a self-assessment, based on the Strengthening Families program self-assessment, but specific to home visiting programs. Over 70 programs that provide home visiting services completed the self-assessment and more than half developed an action plan to enhance or add specific activities to service delivery designed to build protective factors in the families they serve. The coalition is working to share resources and provide technical assistance across programs as they implement their plans.

Ensuring Accountability

Florida is currently working on the development of monitoring and evaluation strategies. This work takes place through an appointed design team. The members of the team provide the local (circuit-level) and state-level voice and expertise in evaluation, research, planning and epidemiology. Florida is creating a management system to monitor the implementation of the state plan with an eye for usefulness to the circuit-level plans. Using Results-Based

Accountability™ for efforts seeking population-level effects, the design team recommended summary reporting. While the management system is under development, the local circuit-level teams and the state reporting entities are monitoring and reporting biannually on implementation progress.

Evolving Work

The Florida Children and Youth Cabinet has identified child maltreatment as one of its four headline indicators for tracking the health and well-being of Florida's children and youth. As such, it adopted the prevention strategies outlined in the state's five-year prevention and permanency plan. Thus, the work across state systems will be accountable to the Governor, Legislature and the Florida Children and Youth Cabinet.

Many state prevention plan leaders are also serving on the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems workgroup as well as the state's Trauma-Informed Care workgroup. These joint capacities will support the coordination of efforts among these plans and the five-year prevention and permanency plan.