

## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES NEW HAMPSHIRE: STATE PROFILE

### Infrastructure

The New Hampshire Strengthening Families initiative began in 2005. The Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) Child Development Bureau works collaboratively with the New Hampshire Children's Trust to lead this initiative. Other members of the leadership team include Early Learning New Hampshire, Division for Family Assistance, Division for Public Health and Safety, Special Medical Services and Spark New Hampshire. The cumulative goal is to embed the Strengthening Families approach within the work of child and family service providers.

The New Hampshire Children's Trust recently made a five-year commitment to implement Strengthening Families statewide. They are continually seeking funding for this work. Additionally, DCYF's Child Development Bureau continues to strive for systematic implementation of the approach. The protective factors have been infused into core child welfare trainings and adopted into the agency's Practice Model.

### Parent Partnerships

The New Hampshire Children's Trust spearheads several efforts to build and sustain parent engagement and advocacy under the Strengthening Families initiative. For example, the governor presents Unsung Heroes awards each February to 28 parents from every region in the state who have dedicated themselves to family and community. New Hampshire Children's Trust also organizes Parent Advocacy Days, in collaboration with Head Start, and works to ensure that families take an active role in politics and elections. Additionally, Spark New Hampshire's Family Engagement Committee is a valued partner in evaluating and building sustainable parent partnerships and engagement strategies in Strengthening Families work.

### Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

Over the last two years, NH has endorsed the Strengthening Families Online Training as a core professional development activity for early childhood professionals. As a result, the Granite State is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation for number of individuals who are registered and are actively completing the training.

NH has two certified trainers in the Bringing Protective Factors to Life Face to Face Training and has started implementing the training throughout the state. Additionally, Strengthening Families training sessions are offered at each state-wide conference and a minimum of one training is offered per Region each year. The NH Children's Trust, along with the SF State Leadership team, has also held two Strengthening Families Summits.

### Strengthening Families

Strengthening Families<sup>™</sup> 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](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net).



NEW HAMPSHIRE

# strengthening families™

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL POLICY

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

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## Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

More than 25 early learning programs in New Hampshire are designated Strengthening Families Programs. These programs receive training and technical assistance from the Child Development Bureau and New Hampshire Children's Trust to support their work with the protective factors. Strengthening Families early care and education programs participate in annual reviews and document program outcomes. Additionally, as NH revises its Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) the draft standards include specific Strengthening Families activities under the Family Engagement construct.

Strengthening Families now has the support and resources it will need to expand beyond early learning programs. In 2012, the first annual Strengthening Families Summit brought together 250 child and family serving providers and parent leaders to broaden their knowledge of the Protective Factors Framework. Additionally, Child Care Aware® of New Hampshire, our contracted child care resource and referral agencies' network, has rolled out a plan to deliver targeted technical assistance to early care and education programs adopting Strengthening Families.

The NH Lakes Region has adopted a plan to bring Strengthening Families into the hands of community members by adopting the Framework, providing education and crafting marketing messages that will highlight the importance of the Framework in practice with all families living, working and playing in that community.

## Ensuring Accountability

The New Hampshire Strengthening Families leadership team will continue to explore options for comprehensive evaluation measures. In 2014, the Strengthening Families Leadership team will meet on a quarterly basis to engage team members in becoming Strengthening Families ambassadors in their work on Task Forces, Committees and other Community Stakeholder groups. Additionally, Child Care Aware® and the Child Development Bureau will work to ensure that target goals are met and to capitalize on opportunities for additional support. DCYF is also building partnerships with other organizations and supporting integrated data collection by family resource centers and family support programs on changes in protective factors among families served.

## Evolving Work

Spark New Hampshire's Policy Committee is exploring the development of a comprehensive early childhood policy for all systems serving children and families. Efforts are focused on statewide community cafés in all ten counties, diversified training and technical assistance opportunities, continued work with Institutes of Higher Education faculty to infuse and embed Strengthening Families Protective Factors framework in all coursework and building community implementation teams. Moreover, several Institutes of Higher Education are exploring the feasibility of implementing the Strengthening Families training within their academic curriculums.

New Hampshire will continue to look at Strengthening Families through the lens of cross-sector system engagement. Future plans include engaging families and other stakeholders in Strengthening Families, as well as infusing Strengthening Families in practice and service delivery systems statewide.

Profile last updated: June 2014