

## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES OKLAHOMA: STATE PROFILE

### Infrastructure

Oklahoma launched Strengthening Families™ in seven pilot communities in 2007 to provide concrete supports to families through early childhood programs. Key partners include the Oklahoma State Department of Health as lead agency, Smart Start Oklahoma (Oklahoma's state early childhood advisory council), the Department of Human Services and Smart Start Communities.

### Parent Partnerships

Several communities have conducted Parent Cafés.

### Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

The Oklahoma Strengthening Families initiative provides training and structure for program staff to better support families and children in their times of need and to help families and program staff build protective factors that reduce the likelihood of adverse home and care environments.

Strengthening Families training and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (PCAN) training was provided throughout five Oklahoma counties. Four centers received the Infant Mental Health endorsement with support through support a community Strengthening Families Initiative

### 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](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net).

**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	✓

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**Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems**

The goals of Oklahoma Strengthening Families are to: (1) improve parents' knowledge of parenting and child development, expand parents' social support circles and increase parents' access to community resources and (2) improve the early childhood program environment in order to better facilitate positive provider-to-child interactions, provider-to-parent interactions and parent-to-parent interactions.

With a training grant from Zero to Three, Oklahoma trained 40 early care and education professionals across the state in the Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect (PCAN) Parent –Provider Partnership curriculum.

Initially, five child care sites in each of the pilot communities participated in the initiative. Today, efforts have expanded to other programs and events in the communities. Activities include school readiness efforts, parent training, parent cafes and community-wide events that focus on the Strengthening Families protective factors.

Oklahoma has embedded the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework in the state's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant, the Smart Start Initiative and the State Plan for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

Oklahoma has built the Strengthening Families framework into the Maternal and Child Health Home Visiting grant. Communities engaged in this work will implement the protective factors in their projects.

**Ensuring Accountability**

Oklahoma completed an evaluation on the community impact of Strengthening Families. Through this effort, Oklahoma constructed a "how to" tool kit for starting Strengthening Families efforts at the community level and a video available for use in marketing Strengthening Families.

**Evolving Work**

Based on the training and professional development over the last year, Oklahoma is focusing on working with programs and community groups to implement the protective factors in their everyday work.

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