



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES GEORGIA: STATE PROFILE

Infrastructure

The Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), Office of Prevention and Family Support, provides funding for the Strengthening Families™ effort in Georgia. Since its inception in 2006, Strengthening Families Georgia (SFG) has expanded from an effort to utilize frontline early childhood caregivers as a means to prevent child abuse and neglect to an initiative aimed at embedding the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework throughout all systems, programs and services supporting families with young children. SFG administration is supported in part by the Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC) with funding by DFCS through the Federal Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant Program. Major partners include: DFCS, GAYC, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Georgia Department of Education, Georgia Department of Public Health, Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers, United Way of Greater Atlanta, Black Child Development Institute – Atlanta Affiliate, Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, Georgia Family Connection Partnership, Head Start Collaboration Office, Georgia Parent Teacher Association, Georgia Chapter- American Academy of Pediatrics, Prevent Child Abuse Georgia, Parent Leaders and Advocates.

Parent Partnerships

Parent leaders have always served on the SFG Leadership Team. SFG began facilitating Parent Cafés across the state in 2010. Since then over 150 Parent Cafés have been held.

Our parent partners are supported and valued through the implementation of parent activities, making parent leadership roles available, ensuring that literature/ communication is free from jargon and by creating an environment where parents’ opinions are respected. Based on survey data many SFG partner organizations have at least one parent engagement strategy in place. Several partner organizations offer opportunities for parents to receive training on leadership and advocacy and to participate in focus groups

Five SFG training modules for parents, one on each protective factor, were developed in 2014 with funding from United Way of Greater Atlanta. In 2017 a SFG Training of Trainers for Parent and Community Leaders was developed with funding from GAYC and will be conducted with funding from the University of Georgia Project F.R.E.E.. In 2017 SFG postcards for parents and caregivers will be translated into Spanish.

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



Implementation Checklist

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| 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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Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

In 2011 SFG developed training modules on the Strengthening Families Protective Factors and an SFG Overview specifically for use across disciplines. We now have over 230 SFG-trained trainers who have delivered face-to-face training to over 6,000 child- and family serving professionals throughout the state since 2012. In addition, the SFG Overview online training module, which went live for the state's Quality Rated system in 2012, was completed by over 24,000 child care staff through March 2017. In 2016 Georgia Technical Colleges began embedding Strengthening Families content into their Early Childhood Care and Education courses.

Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

SFG is partnering in several grant-funded projects including the University of Georgia's Project F.R.E.E. and Project LAUNCH through the GA Department of Public Health. In addition, SFG is part of the Essentials for Childhood initiative in Georgia. In 2011 SFG developed and continues to disseminate newsletters to professionals and parents. SFG's website went live in 2015: <http://strengtheningfamiliesga.net/>

Since 2012, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has used a modified version of the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment, follow-up action plans and online SFG Overview training as key components of the family partnerships standard within their Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). DECAL hired its first Family Engagement Specialist in 2013 to develop a plan, *A Roadmap for Engaging Families with Young Children* (2015) to work more effectively with families of children in Georgia. Strengthening Families is part of the plan and numerous resources for families have been developed by DECAL as a result of Task Force recommendations. As an example, DECAL awarded Family Engagement Community Grants, which were all required to show use of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors, to 21 Family Connection Partnership Collaboratives in 2016.

Ensuring Accountability

In 2012 SFG participated in an extensive evaluation process led by the SFG Evaluation Committee and evaluation consultants to develop a SFG Evaluation Plan, Logic Model and Foundation Visual.

In 2013 a Partner Survey was developed and has been completed by all SFG partners for several years. In 2017 a Leadership Team Evaluation Survey and two Partnership Focus Groups were conducted. The data collected is used to guide future work and inform our Partners.

Evolving Work

In 2017 SFG will develop its second 5-year Strategic Plan. Key components will include ensuring a) support of partners to strengthen their capacity to help families in a way that builds protective factors, b) integration of the protective factors into child and family serving state level organizations' professional development systems and other areas of their work, and c) financial sustainability for SFG to fully implement its programs.

Profile last updated: May 2017