

## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES KENTUCKY: STATE PROFILE

**Mission: Kentucky is strengthening families by enhancing protective factors that reduce the impact of adversity and increase the well-being of children and families through family, community and state partnerships.**

### Infrastructure

In 2013, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood and the Kentucky Department for Public Health convened a group inclusive of many organizations that touch families to explore the implementation of the Strengthening Families framework. These organizations represented by the Leadership Team below made a commitment to embed the protective factors in the daily practice of government and community-based programs. In January 2014, the Leadership Team developed a strategic plan to move the Kentucky Strengthening Families (KYSF) initiative forward in the Commonwealth. The KYSF Leadership Team oversees five state sub-workgroups: Evaluation, Systems Integration, Training and Technical Assistance, Family Informed and Messaging and Awareness.

#### KYSF Leadership Team:

- Department for Public Health, Division of Maternal and Child Health
- Governor's Office of Early Childhood
- Children, Inc.
- Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities
- Department for Community Based Services, Division of Child Care
- Department for Community Based Services, Division of Protection and Permanency
- Department of Education
- Department for Libraries & Archives
- Department for Medicaid Services and Kentucky Children's Health Insurance Program (KCHIP)
- Family Resource and Youth Services Centers
- Kentucky Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
- Kentucky Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs
- Kentucky Head Start Association
- Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children, Inc.
- Metro United Way
- Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky
- Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
- 4C for Children

Currently, KYSF is unfunded and all members of the Leadership Team and Sub-Workgroups attend on a voluntary basis. The KYSF Leadership Team meets in person bi-monthly and most sub-workgroup committees meet quarterly. KYSF maintains a listserv, website and online training portal to ensure strong communication among providers, and families implementing KYSF. For more information: <http://bit.ly/kentuckystrengtheningfamilies>

### 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	

#### State Coordinator

**Tal Curry, MSW, LCSW**  
 KY Strengthening Families Coordinator  
 Department for Public Health  
 502-564-3756 ext. 4361  
[tal.curry@ky.gov](mailto:tal.curry@ky.gov)



## Parent Partnerships

KYSF collaborated with Be Strong Illinois to create the KYSF Parent Café model in 2015. Through Training of Trainer events, KYSF approves individuals, both family members and organization staff, to facilitate Parent Cafés for their community. KYSF recognizes trainers who have met certain criteria to host their own Parent Café Training of Trainer events in order to meet the growing demand for cafés across the state. Through professionally facilitated focus groups, Kentucky Families are true partners in the work of KYSF.

## Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

KYSF has developed a “KYSF Starter Kit” for any provider or family interested in learning how to implement KYSF through small yet significant steps. The “KYSF Family Informed State Workgroup” tested all logos, images, language and print materials with multiple Kentucky families. KYSF is proud of the family-driven resources and materials available for providers and families in Kentucky. View the “KYSF Starter Kit” and other resources here: <http://bit.ly/kentuckystrengtheningfamilies>

## Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

KYSF is working to shift practice, policies and systems to embrace five core beliefs in a shared commitment to:

1. Promote strong families and healthy development for families prenatally through age five
2. Partner with all families and celebrate differences
3. Use protective factors as a strengths-based philosophy to buffer for toxic stress
4. Build knowledge and skills for individual and system change
5. Create safe, stable and nurturing environments for people to have responsive and caring relationships

KYSF recognizes Nurturing and Attachment as a sixth Protective Factor. In response to the five core beliefs above, KYSF understood *families ensuring children feel loved and safe* as critical. Specifically, the KYSF focus on buffering toxic stress and Adverse Childhood Experiences requires families and providers to understand the importance of a loving and nurturing bond between child and caregiver.

## Ensuring Accountability

KYSF utilizes the Protective Factors Survey (FRIENDS National Network), an original KYSF Readiness Survey and a KYSF original survey based on an organization’s current level of involvement and anticipated level of involvement. These three measurements have shown to be useful in meeting organizations, families and communities where they are. Kentucky’s statewide early care and education training portal (ECE-TRIS) collects information on training numbers and evaluates level of understanding after participants complete the free online KYSF Overview Training.

## Evolving Work

In Spring 2017, KYSF hosted a first annual “KYSF State Summit: Making KYSF Your Own.” The KYSF Leadership Team is focusing on support of the 50 plus teams in attendance at the summit as they implement KYSF into their communities and organizations. Additionally, sub-workgroups continue to explore avenues for ensuring accountability and building a KYSF professional learning collaborative network. Recent expansion of the implementation of KYSF Parent Cafés was assisted by mini-grants. KYSF Parent Cafés continue to build excitement and interest in KYSF.

*Profile last updated: August 2017*