



MICHIGAN

# strengthening families™

A PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES MICHIGAN: STATE PROFILE

### Infrastructure

The Strengthening Families™ initiative in Michigan has been led by the Children's Trust Fund (CTF) and the Early Childhood Investment Corporation. CTF and the Investment Corporation have worked collaboratively to increase dialogue about the protective factors and to integrate the Strengthening Families approach at both the state and local level. The Great Start Operations Team (GSOT) serves as Michigan's Strengthening Families Leadership Team. The GSOT provides guidance and decision-making on issues related to early childhood and is composed of leadership from the Investment Corporation, Head Start, CTF and the Michigan Departments of Community Health, Education and Human Services. Additionally, a Strengthening Families Learning Community—which includes representation from Great Start Collaborative (GSC) directors and parent liaisons, CTF program partners and Great Start to Quality Resource Centers (QRIS)—helps to identify the needs and strategies of local partners.

CTF and the Investment Corporation have identified Strengthening Families as an important program strategy and provide staff support for Strengthening Families work in Michigan. To help identify statewide implementation activities as well as areas for training and technical assistance, an annual survey is distributed to all GSCs, CTF grantees and Head Start grantees. Many local programs use CTF or Investment Corporation funding to help support Strengthening Families work in their communities.

### Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

Michigan has focused on providing support to prevention and early learning and care programs as they build relationships with the families and communities they serve. This support has occurred largely through trainings and technical assistance to local programs. A number of GSCs and CTF local councils also provide trainings within their communities and have incorporated the framework into their work plans. To help build local and regional capacity, in 2012 the Investment Corporation sponsored a three-day Strengthening Families "Training for Trainers" for its Great Start to Quality Resource Centers, GSC network and Head Start and child welfare trainers. In 2013, CTF provided a Strengthening Families full-day training for 100 local partners representing prevention, family support, early childhood and child welfare agencies. The Strengthening Families Learning Community has also helped to identify ways to support local implementation of Strengthening Families.

### 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 Contact

Michael Foley  
 Michigan Children's Trust Fund  
 FoleyM2@michigan.gov

## Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

The Strengthening Families approach continues to impact program decisions within CTF and the Investment Corporation. In 2012, Head Start and the Department of Human Services (DHS) became increasingly involved in discussions about the framework and sent training staff to the Strengthening Families "Training for Trainers." DHS also integrated the Protective Factors framework into its Title IV-E waiver design, which began implementation in 2013. In 2012, CTF piloted the Strengthening Families child welfare training in two counties, and DHS utilized the training for Pathways to Potential success coaches who are housed within community schools. Strengthening Families is also being integrated into Great Start to Quality (QRIS). The Strengthening Families "Training for Trainers" provided the capacity to integrate the framework into professional development and training opportunities offered through the regional Great Start to Quality Resource Centers. Additionally, the Investment Corporation sponsored a two-day training for statewide Quality Improvement Consultants to offer support to local early learning and care programs on Strengthening Families and program strategies to integrate the protective factors.

## Ensuring Accountability

Although no structure is in place to evaluate Strengthening Families as a statewide initiative, many programs evaluate their individual efforts. For example, a number of family support programs—including CTF direct service grantees and the Michigan Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program grantees—use the Protective Factors Survey (PFS) as an evaluation tool. Organizations that use Parent Cafés gather participant evaluations.

## Evolving Work

Interest in the Strengthening Families framework has continued to gain momentum in Michigan, both at the state and the local level. To help foster a coordinated, cross-systems dialogue about Strengthening Families at the state level, an interagency workgroup was created in 2013. The workgroup includes representation from each agency that serves on the GSOT. The goals of the workgroup were to 1) evaluate implementation of Strengthening Families at the state and local level; 2) determine the extent to which the Protective Factors framework overlaps or aligns with existing state agency frameworks, initiatives or programs; and 3) make recommendations to the GSOT. In 2014, a consensus workshop was held to bring together state and local partners to describe a vision for Strengthening Families in Michigan and to build consensus around strategies for moving toward that vision. This process will provide an important step in determining the trajectory and strategy of future Strengthening Families work in Michigan.

*Profile last updated: February 2015*