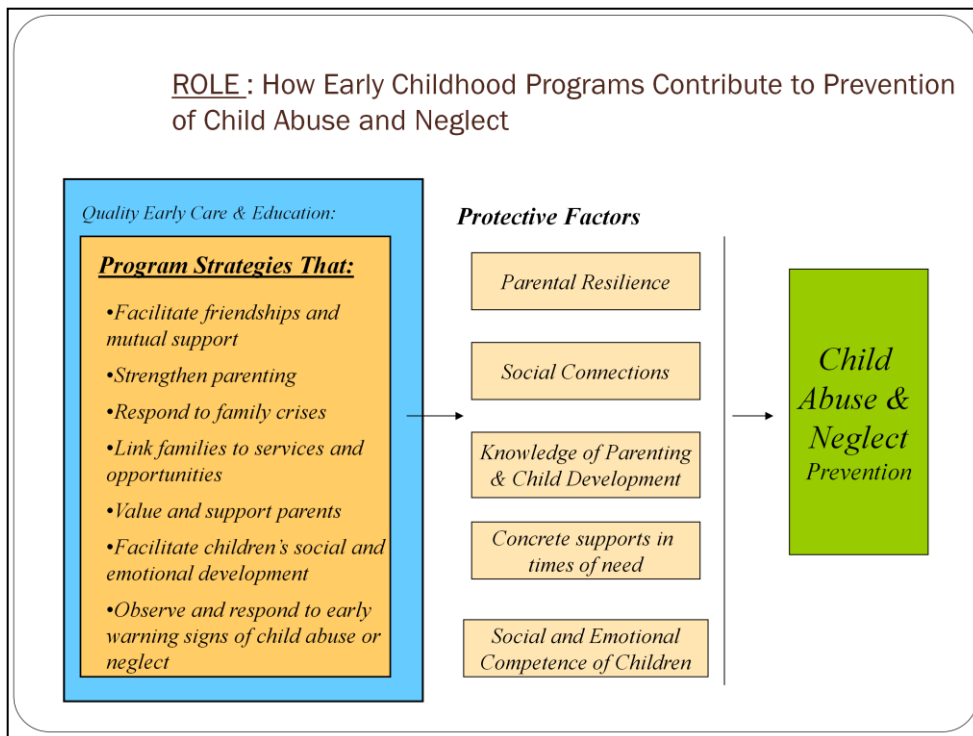


Last session we discussed WHY our role is so important. Today, we're going to deal with WHAT the strategies are, and WHO we are as individual members of a Strengthening Families team.



To review from the last session:

The five Protective Factors are the foundation of the Strengthening Families approach. Extensive research supports the common-sense notion that when these Protective Factors are present and robust in a family, the likelihood of child abuse and neglect diminish.

Parental resilience: The ability to cope and bounce back from all types of challenges

Social connections: Friends, family members, neighbors, and other members of a community who provide emotional support and concrete assistance to parents

Knowledge of parenting and child development: Accurate information about raising young children and appropriate expectations for their behavior

Concrete support in times of need: Financial security to cover day-to-day expenses and unexpected costs that come up from time to time, access to formal supports like TANF and Medicaid, and informal support from social networks

Children's social and emotional development: A child's ability to interact positively with others and communicate his or her emotions effectively.

What the research found

Center for the Study of Social Policy
2001-Present

In 2001, with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#) (CSSP) began studying the role that early care and education programs nationwide can play in strengthening families and preventing abuse and neglect. For the first time, they linked research about preventing child abuse and neglect with similar knowledge about quality early care and education. Next, Strengthening Families moved into a pilot phase in which seven states engaged in a learning partnership with CSSP to implement the Strengthening Families approach.

Through visiting programs, interviewing staff and parents, observing centers in operation, and reviewing surveys, the Center for the Study of Social Policy staff identified seven program strategies that early care and education programs implement to build Protective Factors.

Seven ECE Strategies to Build “Circles of Caring”

1. Facilitate friendships and mutual support
2. Strengthen parenting
3. Respond to family crises
4. Link families to services and opportunities
5. Facilitate children’s social and emotional development
6. Observe and respond to early signs of child abuse and neglect
7. Value and support parents

These are some of the ways that programs can make small but significant—and often affordable—changes to enrich their practice with children and families.

(Leader: Be sure to stress these points before moving to the next seven slides.)

1. **Just as no two child care or family support programs are alike, there is no one way to carry out these strategies. There are many small ways.**
2. **It takes time to make these strategies a part of our daily routine – effective programs target a few at a time and work on them, tweak them and make them part of normal practice.**
3. **Many of these things we are already doing. With the knowledge that comes from Strengthening Families research, we can do them more intentionally and understand their importance in building protective factors.**
4. **The examples on the next slides are activities from six Strengthening Families pilot centers in West Virginia, and were put into place over two to three years. Their activities may or may not fit our particular needs or situations, and there are many other activities not represented on the slides.**

Facilitate friendships and mutual support

- Welcome area for parents
- Coffee
- Resources - computer, internet
- Social Networking Events
- Volunteer e-mail list serve

Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support

Successful programs offered many opportunities for parents to get to know each other, develop mutual support systems and take leadership. Strategies included sports teams, potlucks, classes, camping trips and field trips, advisory groups, board leadership and volunteer opportunities. Special outreach to fathers and extended family members was common.

The slide shows some examples that have been used in West Virginia in a 3-year pilot program.

Strengthen parenting

- Become a United Way Success by 6 Brain Under Construction Zone
- Arrange for desired parenting classes
- Create large display/bulletin board for parents
- Provide bi-monthly handouts on parenting
- Facilitate parent support groups, father activities, grandparent activities, etc.
- Maintain frequent contact with parents regarding their children in the daycare
- One on one contact: teacher to parents
- Display “parenting tips”

Strengthening Parenting

Programs offered many ways for parents to get support on parenting issues when they needed it: a class or a support group, opportunities to meet with teachers, family support workers or other staff, home visits or resources from a lending library. Most programs had classroom designs or technology that allowed parents to observe their children easily. Both parents and staff described the importance of the everyday opportunities at the centers for parents to understand their children’s behavior and respond to it more effectively.

The slide shows some examples that have been used in West Virginia in a 3-year pilot program.

Respond to family crises

- Supportive relationships, especially for single parents
- Friday backpack food program
- Thanksgiving & Christmas food baskets

Respond to Family Crises

In addition to day-to-day contact between teachers and parents that helped develop good relationships and support parents every day, good programs offered extra support to families when they needed it through designated family support workers or other staff who had the time, training, and expertise to connect families to the support they needed. All programs responded when families faced illnesses, job loss, housing problems, and other issues.

The slide shows some examples that have been used in West Virginia in a 3-year pilot program.

Link families to services and opportunities

- Parent Resource Booklets
- Large Display Board – post referrals, community links
- “Family Plans” to be included in orientation; updated yearly, or as child progresses to next teacher

Link Families to Services and Opportunities

Exemplary programs offered parents links to job training, education, health providers and other essential services through their networks in the community. Most programs had family support workers on staff that helped to assess family needs and goals and connect them to services and supports. Mental health consultants were part of almost every program, helping parents and staff work effectively with children who had been excluded from previous programs for challenging behavior, and helping to destigmatize mental health services for children, parents, and staff.

The slide shows some examples that have been used in West Virginia in a 3-year pilot program.

Facilitate children's social and emotional development

- Talaris Emotion Coaching curriculum
- During orientation, thoroughly discuss curriculum, including aspects of social and emotional development
- Connect families to resources
- Provide/arrange for parenting classes regarding social/emotional development
- Help parents understand routine assessment results

Facilitate Children's Social and Emotional Development

Many programs used "I Can Problem Solve", "Second Step" or some other curriculum focused on helping children to articulate their feelings and get along with others. Parents in many of the programs described how the curriculum influenced their perspectives on their children and their behavior toward the child when children brought home what they learned in the classroom.

The slide shows some examples that have been used in West Virginia in a 3-year pilot program.

Observe and respond to early signs of child abuse and neglect

- Include documents (regarding child abuse and neglect) in initial staff training
- Arrange for training in child abuse/neglect
- Supportive calls to homes for children with repeated absences

Observe and Respond to Early Warning Signs of Abuse and Neglect

All programs trained and supported staff to observe children carefully and respond at the first sign of any difficulty. Programs used indicators such as frequent absences, missing payments, late pick-ups, or signs of parental stress as opportunities to proactively reach out to families and connect them with family support or other services. Special protocols for child abuse or neglect reporting allowed programs to provide continuity and support for families that were the subject of reports. Parents at several programs backed up the effectiveness of this strategy with personal stories of how the programs had helped them alter situations that were dangerous for children and continue to be involved with the program. Most programs also developed ongoing relationships with staff at child protective services to ensure that children were safe and parents got the services they needed.

The slide shows some examples that have been used in West Virginia in a 3-year pilot program.

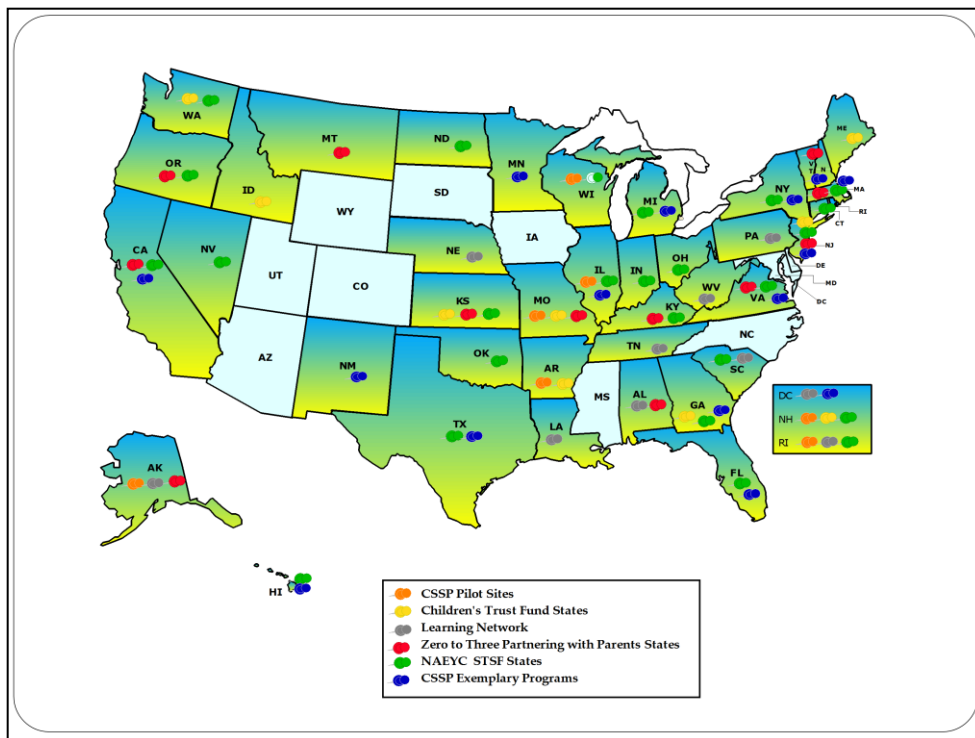
Value and support parents

- Offer special programs/activities (e.g. for fathers only; for grandparents only)
- Provide childcare during parenting classes
- Invite parents to staff seminars, classes, etc
- Provide parenting classes of interest (per survey)
- Facilitate support groups for parents
- Arrange for speakers on topics of interest to parents
- Post events for parent participating
- Accommodate family schedules – sports, etc.

Value and Support Parents

Because the relationship between parents and teachers is essential to the programs' ability to connect with parents, support, training, and supervision of teachers to help them do this effectively was very important. Program leaders were involved in many day-to-day activities and were very accessible to staff and parents. Teaching staff were encouraged to take initiative in their relationships with families and address concerns when they arose, knowing that they had back-up from supervisors and other staff within the program. Male staff members were especially recruited.

The slide shows some examples that have been used in West Virginia in a 3-year pilot program.



In 2008 the Strengthening Families National Network was launched. As you can see from this map from 2008, the Strengthening Families movement is spreading across the country. Through the website **strengtheningfamilies.net**, a guide book and self-assessment tools; research; program write-ups; newsletter; handouts; power points and many other resources are available to share ideas and help programs of every size start the journey.

What we have to remember is that every program is different, and every teacher and staff member comes to their work with different strengths and challenges. As we commit to the process of strengthening families to build protective factors, and reduce child abuse and neglect, it is important to know that we start with small steps and build on, rather than trying to make a lot of changes immediately.

Every one of us is important, every one of us has strengths to bring to the process, and every one of us has areas where we need to build our skills. Next we're going to use one of the tools from the national network to help us get started.

Strengthening Families Staff Survey

Professional Development tool for Our Program

Complete questions 11-14 only

No right or wrong answers

“Parent” refers to primary person you communicate with regarding the child (may include grandparents or other guardians, etc.)

Strengthening Families assists family- and child-serving programs by building their capacity to work effectively with families.

Although this survey was designed as a confidential tool for the national Strengthening Families project, we'll just be focusing on a few sections for our own professional development purposes.

Please take a few minutes to complete sections 11 through 14 of this survey. There are no right or wrong answers: your opinions and experiences are very valuable to the continued development of this project.

In this survey, the word “parent” refers to the primary person your program communicates with in regard to the child and is understood to include parents, grandparents, guardians, etc.

| 11. Please rate the amount of information you have for each of the following items: | | 1 = No information 2 = Heard of it 3 = Some information 4 = A lot of information NA = Not part of my job responsibilities | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| a. | Age appropriate behavior for children | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| b. | How to identify a child's special needs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| c. | How to address children's challenging behavior | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| d. | How trauma impacts children's social and emotional development | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| e. | Different strategies for involving parents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| f. | The lives, circumstances, and interests of parents/families/children I work with | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| g. | The culture and values of the parents/children attending our program | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| h. | How to convey information on parenting and child development | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| i. | Signs of stress in children and adults | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| j. | Services and resources for families in our community OR a person in my program who has this information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| k. | How the child welfare system works | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |

(Leader note: Your leadership team can use the results for self-assessment and strategy planning. This is not always possible with a very small staff. Regardless, encourage staff to be as honest and candid as possible in their responses. Do not review or comment on their answers during this session.)

| 12. Over the past year, how often did you engage in the following activities? | | |
|--|--|--|
| a. Greeted parents by name | <input type="checkbox"/> All of the time <input type="checkbox"/> Most of the time <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely <input type="checkbox"/> Never | |
| b. Asked parents about their hopes and dreams for themselves and their family | Estimate number of times | |
| c. Helped a parent that seemed isolated connect with others in or out of the program | Estimate number of times | |
| d. Worked with a family to help them connect to a service or community support | Estimate number of times | |
| e. Worked with a parent that was struggling with a child development issue | Estimate number of times | |
| f. Addressed a parenting issue that you were concerned about with a parent | Estimate number of times | |
| g. Provided support or help to a parent that seemed stressed or in crisis | Estimate number of times | |
| h. Hosted, helped to organize, or attended parent/family activities in your program | Estimate number of times | |
| i. Helped a parent develop strategies for dealing with child behavior issues | Estimate number of times | |

(Leader note: Your leadership team can use the results for self-assessment and strategy planning. This is not always possible with a very small staff. Regardless, encourage staff to be as honest and candid as possible in their responses. Do not review or comment on their answers during this session.)

| 13. I feel that it is important to my job to: | | 1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. | Get to know the parents of each of the children in my program | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. | Foster a sense of community among the families I work with | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. | Talk with parents about parenting and child development | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. | Respond when families are going through a difficult time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. | Connect families to services and resources in the community (or connect them to someone in my agency who can) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. | Help parents to understand and respond to their children's emotions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g. | Respect parents' values and decisions about their children | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h. | Talk with parents about parenting practices that concern me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i. | Help parents strengthen Protective Factors in their family | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| j. | Prevent child abuse and neglect | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| k. | Personally acknowledge parent efforts and contributions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| l. | Help parents deal with children's challenging behaviors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

(Leader note: Your leadership team can use the results for self-assessment and strategy planning. This is not always possible with a very small staff. Regardless, encourage staff to be as honest and candid as possible in their responses. Do not review or comment on their answers during this session.)

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|----|
| 14. How comfortable are you in the following areas? | | 1 = I need much more skill-building in this area 2 = I need some skill-building in this area 3 = My skills in this are satisfactory 4 = My skills in this are strong NA = Not applicable to my job responsibilities | | | | |
| a. | Reaching out to parents who are hard to engage | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| b. | Addressing children's challenging behaviors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| c. | Talking with families about a crisis they are having | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| d. | Talking with parents about parenting practices or behavior changes that concern me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| e. | Successfully connecting families to the help they need | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| f. | Talk with families about what they need | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| g. | Partnering with parents to better understand and address their children's challenging behaviors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| h. | Connecting with parents who have different lifestyles, cultures, attitudes, and values than mine | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| i. | Responding to a family that is under stress | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |
| j. | Following my program's protocol in making a report to child protective services | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | NA |

(Leader note: Your leadership team can use the results for self-assessment and strategy planning. This is not always possible with a very small staff. Regardless, encourage staff to be as honest and candid as possible in their responses. Do not review or comment on their answers during this session.)

Be sure to fill in one for yourself. Have everyone fold their surveys in half and collect them.

Next Session:

- Talk about priorities for training and information-sharing
- Introduce Parenting Messages, Lessons & Resources from Brain Under Construction ZoneSM

Prevent Child Abuse West Virginia and its funding partners—the West Virginia Children's Trust Fund, the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources—provide this opportunity to help children grow up free from abuse & neglect.

This training is also made possible through partnership with Innovation Grant sites in Cabell & Wayne Counties administered by the Cabell County Family Resource Network, with in-kind support from West Virginia Child Care Centers United, River Valley Child Development Services, United Way of the River Cities, United Way of Monongalia and Preston Counties

