

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES ALABAMA: STATE PROFILE

Infrastructure

Alabama became involved in the Strengthening Families™ initiative in 2006. The Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention/Children's Trust Fund (CTF) served as the lead agency from 2006 to 2011. In 2011, CTF provided a \$30,000 grant to the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) to take over the role as lead agency. Currently, CTF serves as the co-lead agency for the Strengthening Families work. Other partners include the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers, the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Planning Group/State Blueprint Committee, early care and education providers across the state, the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education and the Alabama Department of Human Resources Child Care Services Division. The goal is to engage early care and education providers across Alabama, impacting a minimum of 1,000 parents per year through CTF-funded Strengthening Families efforts. Current funding is \$40,000 annually from CTF to APC to support Strengthening Families.

Alabama has a full-time Strengthening Families coordinator. Additionally, the initiative has gained traction through partnerships with the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers and the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems effort.

Parent Partnerships

Building on Parent Leadership Training funded by CTF over the past three years, a group of parent leaders and professionals have become part of the Alabama Parent Leadership Network. This program brings parents together building skills and providing training to strengthen their families. It focuses on building protective factors that promote positive and healthy outcomes for their families and the communities they live in.

Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

The Strengthening Families online curriculum is now an approved training option to meet licensure requirements for early care and education programs. Early care and education programs engaged in Strengthening Families focus on one protective factor per month, sharing information and strategies with staff and parents.

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

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

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Shifting Practice, Policies and Systems

Thanks to the grant funding provided by CTF, work has been done to engage multiple family and child welfare systems. Examples of emerging systems work include: 1) engaging the Department of Human Resources to approve training for licensure credit, to embed Strengthening Families within child welfare practice and to embed Strengthening Families within the QRIS pilot; 2) engaging the Department of Early Childhood Education to work toward implementing Strengthening Families within Alabama's Pre-K system and Home Visitation efforts; and 3) engaging local United Way Success By 6® initiatives as well as home visitation programs in embedding the protective factors within their practice.

Alabama is partnering with the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers to build capacity within early care and education sites across the state. Additionally, CTF now requires all grantees to complete the online Strengthening Families curriculum developed by the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds. APC is working with child care programs across the state to encourage the use of the online curriculum.

Ensuring Accountability

CTF strategically decided to require Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grantees to include the Protective Factors Survey (PFS) developed by the FRIENDS National Resource Center in their program evaluation plans. Grantees use the Strengthening Families self-assessment tool as well as the PFS to measure their work and report their results (including the number of families served) monthly to CTF. Auburn University is evaluating the initiative, using the PFS and a retrospective evaluation tool.

Evolving Work

Alabama continues to use the Strengthening Families online curriculum and will continue to add Strengthening Families sites. Alabama will also continue to engage partners and seek additional funding for

sustainability. There are ongoing efforts to embed Strengthening Families within the state systems described above. Additionally, Alabama has been a Help Me Grow state since 2012. Strengthening Families and Help Me Grow have been woven together to increase the impact of both initiatives through cross training, information sharing and shared funding and resources. Since 2015, Alabama Project LAUNCH - Linking Actions for Unmet Needs In Children's Health - has focused on the social and emotional health and well-being of infants/young children (ages 0 - 8) and their families. Family strengthening and parent skills training is one of five core strategies. Alabama Project LAUNCH in collaboration with APC's Strengthening Families™ initiative convenes Strengthening Families™ Community Cafés in Tuscaloosa County and provides professional development on the model for service providers. In 2016, LAUNCH supported an expansion of the Alabama Parent Leadership Network through a unique curriculum and framework that builds skills for parents to become leaders in their homes and communities and effective advocates for what families need. Future partners include Alabama's Early Intervention System of the Department of Rehabilitation Services.

Profile last updated: July 2016