AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Add Venue and Presenter Information Here

"This project was supported in part by the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Community Based Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CFDA 93.590). Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Community Based Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CFDA 93.590)."
What is Strengthening Families?

Strengthening Families is a national initiative of the Center for the Study of Social Policy. An approach to working with families based on evidence that when five key protective factors are present:

- We can prevent child abuse
- We can promote optimal healthy growth and development of children
How is Strengthening Families Funded?

In Georgia, Strengthening Families (SFG) is supported in part by the Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services through the Federal Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant Program.

A Partnership of over 50 agencies and organizations support SFG. The Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC) chairs and administers the SFG Partnership and Leadership Team.

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Core Functions
State, system, agency, program and community leaders work across systems to:
• Build parent partnerships
• Deepen knowledge and understanding
• Shift practice, policy and systems
• Ensure accountability

Program Practice
Programs that serve children and families:
• Shift organization culture to value and build upon families’ strengths
• Make policy changes to support changes in worker practice
• Implement everyday actions that support families in building protective factors

Worker Practice
Individual workers:
• Have knowledge of protective factors and skills to help families build them
• Change their approach to relationships with parents
• Implement everyday actions that support families in building protective factors

Protective Factors
Families are supported to build:
• Parental resilience
• Social connections
• Knowledge of parenting and child development
• Concrete support in times of need
• Social and emotional competence of children

Results
Strengthened families
Optimal child development
Reduced likelihood of child abuse and neglect

The Pathway to Improved Outcomes for Children and Families
Our Framework

The Protective Factors provide a common framework for collaboration that is

- intentional,
- purposeful,
- and focused

on promoting optimal development of young children and strengthening their families.
What Are the Five Protective Factors?

1. **Parental Resilience**  
   *Parents Can Bounce Back*

2. **Social Connections**  
   *Parents Have Friends*

3. **Knowledge of Child Development**  
   *Parents Know How Children Grow and Learn*

4. **Concrete Support in Times of Need**  
   *Parents Know Where to Turn for Help*

5. **Social and Emotional Competence of Children**  
   *Children Learn to Talk About and Handle Feelings*
Going Beyond Child Care

The Strengthening Families Approach

- Benefits ALL families
- Builds on family strengths, buffers risk, and promotes better outcomes
- Builds on and can be integrated into existing programs, strategies, systems and community opportunities.
Improving, Not Replacing

The Strengthening Families Approach

- Can be implemented through small but significant changes in everyday actions
- Is grounded in research, practice and implementation knowledge
Goals For Today

- Understand the key elements of the **Strengthening Families Five Protective Factors**
- Identify ways that your programs are already supporting the development of protective factors in families
- Brainstorm how you can help families build protective factors
Introductions and Group Activity

Let’s get to know each other!

We are here to learn from each other and the children and families we work with. What are your expectations?

What challenges do families face in raising children from birth to age 5?
Protective Factors Help Families Meet Challenges

Let’s take a look at the challenges you listed. Which Protective Factors would help families deal with those challenges?

1. Parental Resilience
2. Social Connections
3. Knowledge of Child Development
4. Concrete Support in Times of Need
5. Social and Emotional Competence of Children
Small Group Activity

Choose one protective factor. What can your program do to help families build this protective factor?

- Be specific
- Be creative
- Think outside of the box
- List actions and activities
- Strategize how to use existing resources
- Assign a recorder and spokesperson and be prepared to share your one best idea
Parental Resilience

- Helps cope and bounce back from challenges.
- Can affect how a parent deals with stress.
- Develops trusting relationships.
- Involves creatively solving problems, maintaining a positive attitude, and seeking help when needed.

“Be strong and flexible”
Social Connections

- Addresses social isolation ... a key risk factor related to child abuse and neglect.

- Provides emotional support and concrete assistance from friends, family, neighbors and other members of the community.

“Parents need friends.”
Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

- Helps parents better understand and care for their children if they have accurate information about raising children and appropriate expectations.

- Will be used more often from people parents trust and feel respected by, particularly when they are struggling.

- Is most useful if relevant to their lives and available when parents need it.

- Is best shared by education, modeling, and coaching.

“Parenting is part natural, part learned.”

Strengthening Families Georgia
Concrete Support in Times of Need

- Ensures basic needs (food, clothing, shelter)
- Minimizes the stress of difficult situations, such as a family crisis or a condition such as substance abuse
- Connects families to services, particularly those more difficult to accept (domestic violence, substance abuse counseling, mental health, etc.)

“We all need help sometimes.”
Social and Emotional Competence of Children

- Helps children put their feelings into words which helps parents be more responsive in a positive way.

- Impacts the parent-child relationship. Parent-child interaction is affected by a child’s ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate, and effectively communicate emotions.

- Helps keep development on track which, in turn, helps keep children safe. Challenging behaviors increase the risk for abuse.

“Children connect and relate to their world.”
SF Resources for Professionals

- National Child Abuse Prevention Month Activity Calendars in English and Spanish for Parents, Programs and Communities

- Parenting Tip Sheets in English and Spanish
  [https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resource-guide/tip-sheets/](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resource-guide/tip-sheets/)

- Center for Study of Social Policy

- FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention
  [http://www.friendsnrc.org](http://www.friendsnrc.org)

- Making Meaningful Connections 2015 Prevention Resource Guide
  [https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/guide.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/guide.pdf)
SF Resources for Professionals

Strengthening Families
Self-Assessments for Programs and Providers

Online Self-Assessment and Protective Factor Links to SF Tools, Guides and Assessments:

http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/practice#program-self-assesments

http://friendsnrc.org/protective-factors-survey
Our Vision

All families with children birth through five in Georgia have the resources and support necessary for a meaningful and successful life.
Our Mission

To utilize the Strengthening Families asset-based framework of protective factors in all systems, programs, services and activities supporting families and young children as the approach to achieving the vision.
Strengthening Families Georgia: A Foundation for Enhancing Family and Child Serving Agencies

- Identify and support parents, guardians, and caregivers
- Value the culture and unique aspects of each family
- Take mutual responsibility for better outcomes for children and families
- Promote and educate policymakers, practitioners, and citizens on the importance of supporting families with children and their needs through a strength-based approach and to promote the Strengthening Families Georgia framework.
Strengthening Families Georgia

Training

Parent Cafés

Public Awareness
SFG 2011-15 Public Awareness Activities

- Embed SF Protective Factors in Key Georgia Initiatives
  - Early Childhood Education
  - Child Welfare
  - Child Abuse Prevention
  - Home Visiting
  - Public Health

- Developed SFG Overview and Protective Factor Training (Live and On-line Training)

- Developed and Provided SFG Train the Trainer Courses
  - Promote Parent Cafes and Parent Engagement

- SFG Evaluation Plan Completed – Implementation in 2013+
  - Create Public Awareness for SFG in Georgia
Where Do We Start?

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE...

- Share what you learned today with colleagues.
- Complete the online self-assessment.
- Decide what new steps you can take in your organization to strengthen families.
- Have more conversations with parents seeking their input.
Strengthening Families Tools

- **Program Self-Assessment Tools:**
  - Center-Based Early Care and Education Programs
  - Family Child Care Providers
  - Home Visiting Programs
  - Community-Based Programs

- Protective Factors Survey (parents)
- Staff Survey
- Integrated Action Planning (aligned with QRIS)
- Reporting
### Sample Self-Assessment Page

**How do programs demonstrate that parents are valued?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 The program has multiple avenues for regular communication with families.</td>
<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
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<td>1.2 The program provides an opportunity for families about the program philosophy, assessed goals, and curriculum objectives.</td>
<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
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<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
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<td>1.3 The program includes specific strategies to engage parents in the program (e.g., newsletters, parent meetings, family nights).</td>
<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
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<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4 The program includes specific strategies to involve parents in their child’s development (e.g., parent education sessions, family nights).</td>
<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 The program includes specific strategies to support parents in their role as caregivers (e.g., parent education sessions, family nights).</td>
<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
<td>No Sub-lines.</td>
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**Comments**

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**Strengthening Families Georgia**

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Conversations to Have with Staff

- What are we already doing to build protective factors? What else could we do?
- How might this affect our work? What would be the benefits? What would be the difficulties?
- How might building protective factors impact parents and how parents relate to their children?
- How might building protective factors impact the parents we are most concerned about?
Conversations to Have with Parents

- What’s hard about being a parent? How can our staff help you deal with those challenges?
- How can we make this a welcoming place where families feel comfortable asking for help?
- Do you have ideas about how we can reach out to parents during times of stress, isolation?
- How can we make it easy for parents to make connections with each other?
Training Resources

- **SFG Face to Face Training**
  (Overview and 5 Protective Factor Modules)

  strengtheningfamiliesga@gmail.com

- **National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds (The Alliance) On-line Training Modules**

  [http://www.ctfalliance.org/onlinetraining.htm](http://www.ctfalliance.org/onlinetraining.htm)
THANK YOU!
If you have questions or comments please contact us: strengtheningfamiliesga@gmail.com
Or visit our website: strengtheningfamiliesga.net