The Strengthening Families Initiative

An Introduction
Strengthening Families is:

A strategic, feasible approach to child abuse prevention that is:

- systematic,
- national,
- reaches large numbers of very young children, and
- will have impact long before abuse or neglect occurred
Early care and education programs can be central because they offer:

- Daily contact with parents and children
- Uniquely intimate relationship with families
- A universal approach of positive encouragement and education for families
- An early warning and response system at the first sign of trouble
**Program Strategies That:**
- Facilitate friendships and mutual support
- Strengthen parenting
- Respond to family crises
- Link families to services and opportunities
- Value and support parents
- Facilitate children’s social and emotional development
- Observe and respond to early warning signs of child abuse or neglect

**Protective Factors**
- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development
- Concrete supports in times of need
- Social & Emotional Competence of Children

**Quality Early Care & Education**
The Research Process

**Step 1**: Search the evidence to find out what factors influence child abuse and neglect

**Step 2**: Explore the connection between factors that prevent child abuse and neglect and what quality early childhood programs do to build them

**Step 3**: Identify programs that build the factors and learn how they do it

**Step 4**: Learn about policy and practice changes needed to infuse the model statewide through a partnership with 7 pilot states
Getting to a National Reach

- 33 states have Strengthening Families leadership teams
- SFI is being supported by a number of national partner organizations
- Interest and support from Federal Partners
- Expanding funding for the approach
- National leadership summit
The National Reach of SFI

[Map of the United States with various states marked in different colors indicating different categories such as CSSP Pilot Sites, Children's Trust Fund States, Learning Network, Zero to Three Partnering with Parents States, NAEYC STSF States, and CSSP Exemplary Programs.]
A reasonable estimate by 2008

- Total centers: 34,614
- Total children 0-5 in child care in these states: 2,873,966
Hallmarks for Statewide Implementation

- More ECE programs use the protective factors framework
- Parent leadership is demonstrated at all levels
- Integration of Strengthening Families into Early Care and Education initiatives in many settings is evident
- Early Care and Education and child welfare services (CWS) build stronger, mutually beneficial relationships
- Documentation describes key decision points and provides evidence that the “Hallmarks” are being achieved
The Framework for State Implementation

Laying Groundwork
- Building a Leadership Team
- Supporting a SF Initiative

Implementing Strategies
- Working w/Early Care & Education Programs
- Parent Partnerships
- Professional Development
- Working w/Child Welfare Agencies

Sustaining Change
- Policy & Systems Change
- Evaluation
Program Implementation

- Use of the self-assessment to develop a Strengthening Families action plan

IN MOST STATES

- Training on protective factors and family strengthening

IN SOME STATES

- Small pots of funds for action plan implementation

- Learning networks
Where are we going from here?

- SFI Network
- Specific focus on the ECE/CW linkages
- Identifying funding and strategies for research and evaluation
- Goal of policy infusion at federal and state levels
- Exploring application of ideas outside of ECE sector
- Increased focus on parent partnerships
The Network

Public Commitment/Sustainability
- Strategic Communications
- Policy Agenda
- Relationship Building Strategy
- Celebration Strategies
- Parent Partnership

Knowledge Development
- Learning Circles (Evaluation, Prof. Dev., Parent Partnerships, CW/EC linkages, Home-based providers, Pre-K, Disproportionality/Equity)
  - Ongoing Tracking
  - Strategy briefs/Papers/videos, etc.
  - Meetings/symposia
  - Field Research—storytelling/documentation
  - Tool development

Materials/Dissemination
- Electronic Library (vetted Materials)
  - Market Place
  - State Reports
  - Links to Partners

Learning and Support
DIY TA*
- Training Marketplace
- Reviewed curricula & providers
- Electronic Library/Marketplace

Peer TA
- Mentoring/matching
- Cross-site visits
- Peer matches
- Meetings
- Conference calls

Implementation Leadership
- Strategic Planning
- Info/Persuasion
- Topic Consultation
- Highlight Success
- Mentor & coach

* Do It Yourself Technical Assistance