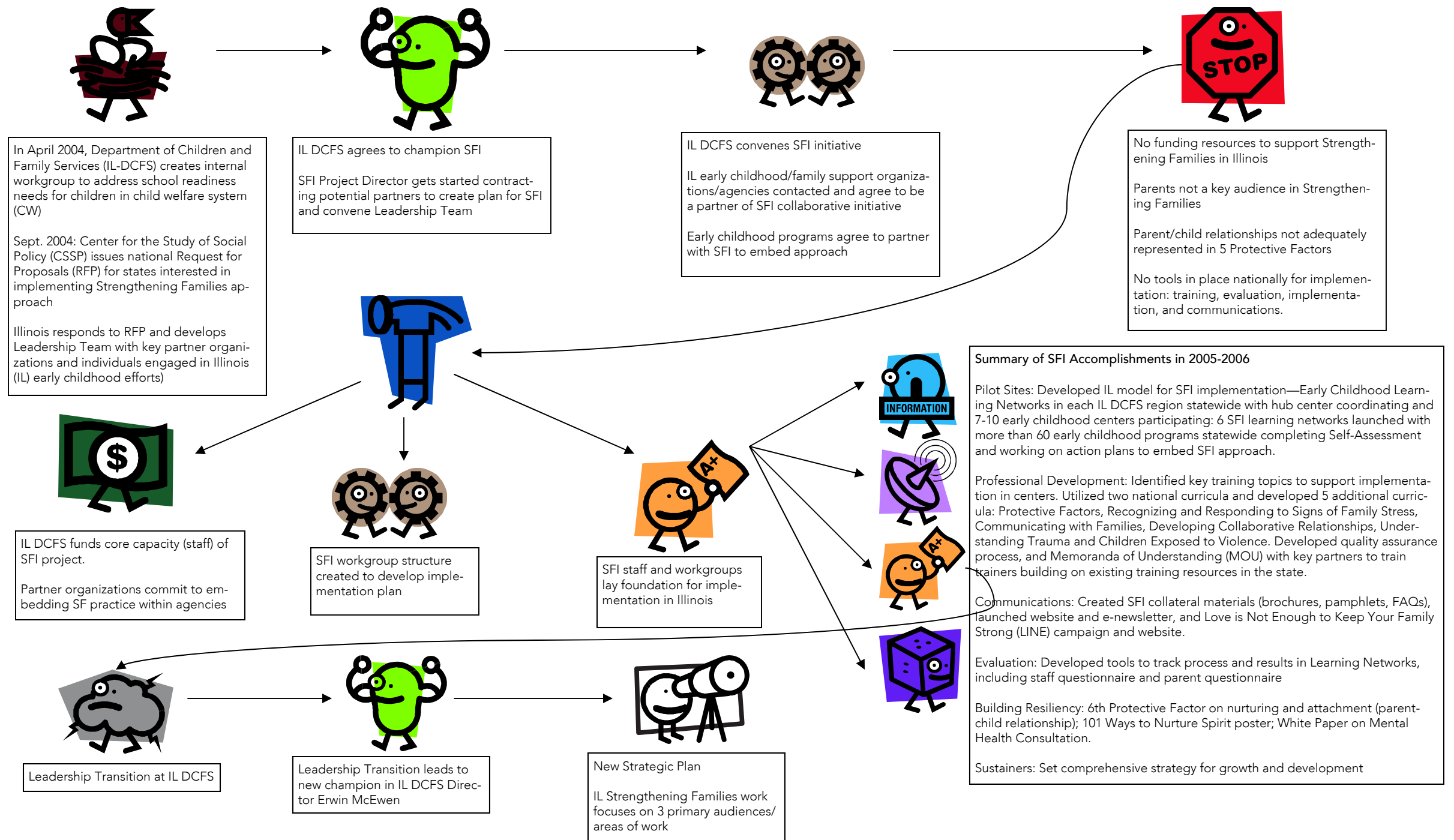
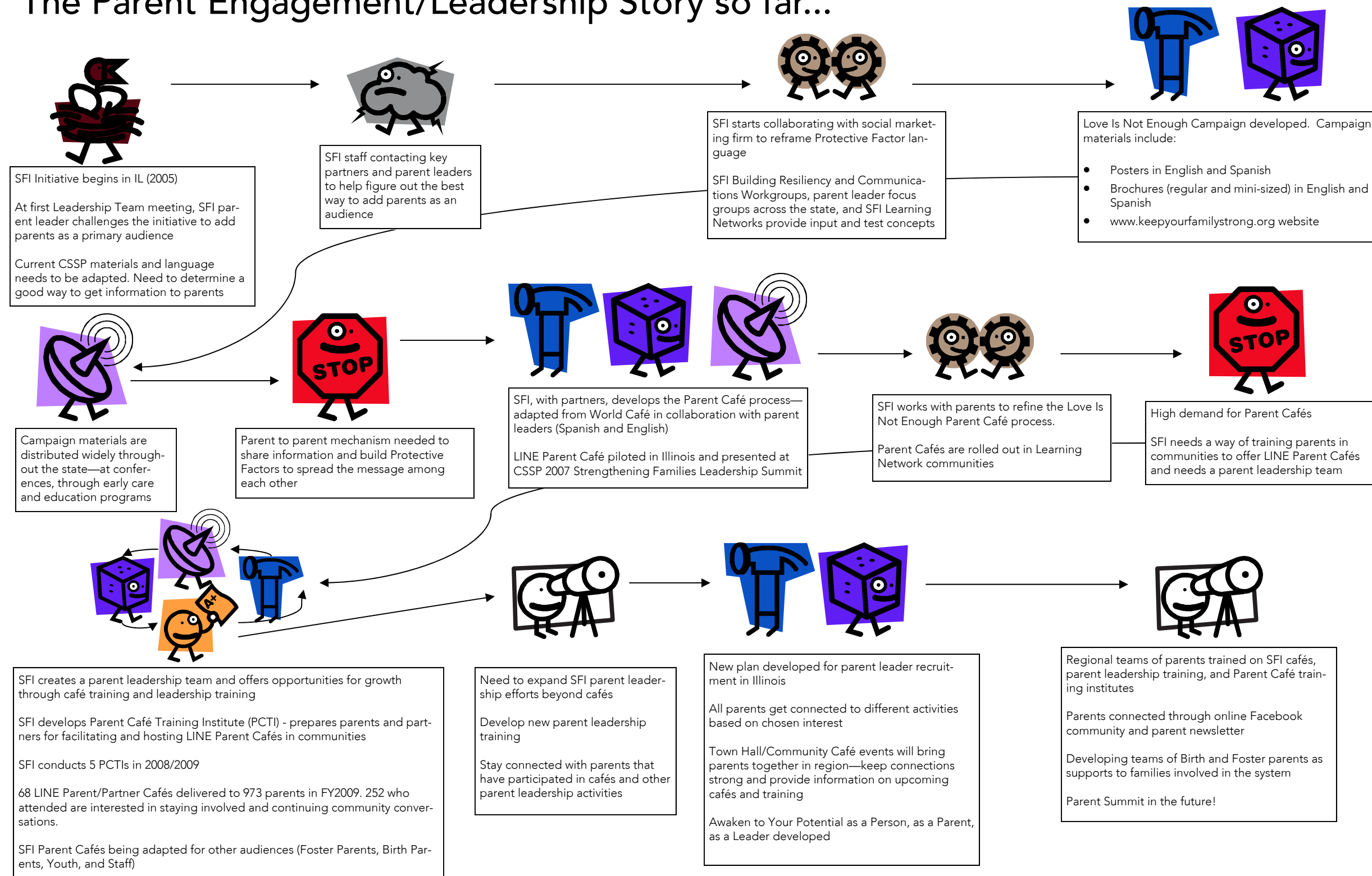


# Strengthening Families Illinois (SFI) - How it all got started...a BRIEF Overview

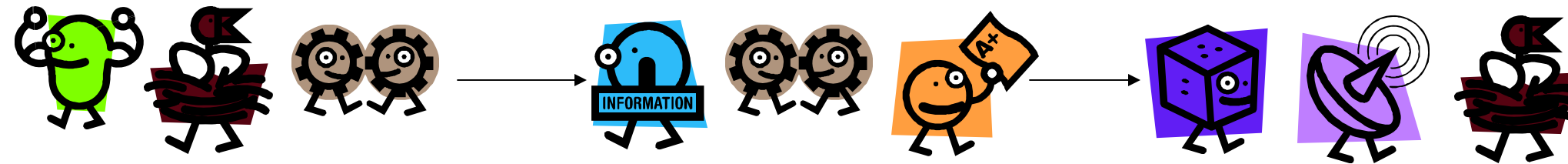


# The Parent Engagement/Leadership Story so far...



# The Child Welfare Story so far...

# illinois



In April 2004, Department of Children and Family Services (IL DCFS) crates internal working group to address school readiness needs for children in the child welfare system (staffed by consultant who will be SFI Project Director)

Trauma-informed practice and lifetime approach are key child welfare innovations. SFI seen as part of both.

Logic model for school readiness developed calling for 3-5 year-olds to be involved in quality early care and education and for IL DCFS to work with early childhood programs to ensure they can meet the needs of traumatized kids

SFI convened by DCFS in 2005 and embraced as a key mechanism for linking early childhood and child welfare in communities

Collaborative agreements between Head Start grantee agencies and IL DCFS for outreach/recruitment, collaborative service planning, and cross-training of staff

Surveyed caseworkers and uncovered need for internal communications campaign on the importance of early childhood education

Internal workgroup identifies need for policy change to expand enrollment of IL DCFS wards in early childhood education

Education policy 314 revised to ensure that all wards 3-5 are enrolled in quality early care and education programs (Head Start, Pre-K, accredited center) for at least 1/2 day

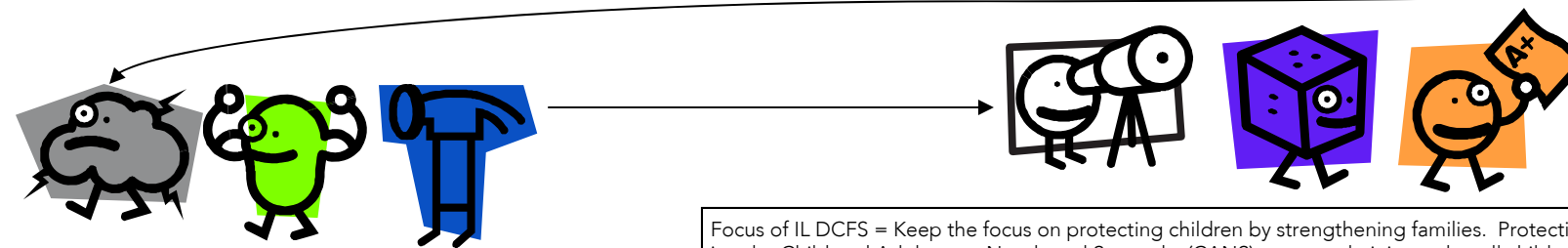
IL DCFS communicates importance of School Readiness initiative internally and externally through contract child welfare agencies

Directors' messages

Developed and disseminated materials to caseworkers on importance of enrolling children in early care and education and collaborating with these programs

Embedded preschool enrollment into performance contracts for child welfare agencies

Developed supports for caseworkers to identify early childhood education placements and trouble-shoot problems (engaged existing consulting educational advisors and early childhood specialists)



Leadership transition at DCFS

New champion Director Erwin McEwen emerges with renewed vision for strengthening families throughout Illinois—"Child welfare shouldn't be in the child-rearing business; we should be in the strengthening families business

Collaboration between SFI learning networks stalled—whose job is it?

Focus of IL DCFS = Keep the focus on protecting children by strengthening families. Protective Factors embedded throughout the child welfare system and tools, including the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) survey, administered to all children entering the system. Other tools include a template for integrated assessment, a parent handbook on readiness for reunification, and a reunification worksheet used by caseworkers

Hundreds of child welfare workers and Head Start providers have participated in cross-trainings on SFI's work and learned how to increase partnerships

State policy mandates that all children ages 3-5 in state custody are enrolled in high quality early care and education programs, and memoranda of understanding between Head Starts and child welfare department guarantee that these children are moved to the top of Head Start waiting lists

Contract child welfare agency providing both child welfare and early care and education services has linked these two service areas internally and is launching a learning network of other such agencies to embed SF practice

Statewide School Readiness Specialist team (6 union positions) brought on as liaisons to support enrollment of youngest wards in early care and education programs and support early childhood/child welfare collaboration locally

Elements of trauma-informed and strengths-based practice have been woven throughout trainings and ongoing professional development for child welfare professionals. 3000+ supervisors, caseworkers, and other direct service staff trained on Strengths Based, Trauma-Informed Service Planning in Fall 2009 (including Protective Factors)

Differential response approach being explored in Illinois

Family Advocacy Centers open throughout the state—community support for families involved with the child welfare system

# Early Care and Education story so far...

