

strengthening families

THROUGH EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

new jersey

strengthening families national network partner

LEAD AGENCY

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ASPECTS OF NEW JERSEY'S APPROACH

Piloting Strengthening Families in eight "Abbot District" early care and education programs with funding from the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds and the Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships

Establishing a memorandum of agreement between two state agencies to provide training in Strengthening Families to five early care and education programs in each county through a contract with the Child Care Resource and Referral entities

Creating a Strengthening Families Institute and accompanying manual for Child Care Resource and Referral master trainers working with local early care and education centers

Using Strengthening Families to establish a more collaborative relationship between the Department of Youth and Family Services and Early Care and Education around Differential Response, the Child Welfare Training Academy, a new case practice model, and other related venues within child welfare

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Increasing the number of centers participating in Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education

Integrating Strengthening Families into other professional fields, with particular emphasis on health

Enhancing statewide funding for Strengthening Families

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES NATIONAL NETWORK

With funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the SFNN, brings together states, territories, and tribes implementing Strengthening Families with national organizations embedding the approach into their work.

Partners in the SFNN have deep, broad-based Strengthening Families initiatives across multiple systems in the state, and have a leadership role in the network. 9 states are partners in the SFNN.

Affiliates in the SFNN are strongly committed to Strengthening Families and are working towards comprehensive implementation of the approach at the state level. 14 states are affiliates in the SFNN.

For more about Strengthening Families visit www.strengtheningfamilies.net

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PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Parent representatives currently sit on the statewide Strengthening Families Task Force. New Jersey's initiative works closely with Parents Anonymous and the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN), and selected parents from the Montclair Community Pre-Kindergarten and Abbot District sites. New Jersey's Strengthening Families team aims to build on current efforts, such as inviting two parents at a Strengthening Families Institute (see below), in order to involve these parents more in all aspects of the statewide initiative.

In 2008, New Jersey's Strengthening Families team will be actively working to engage parents in several ways. Leaders plan to convene a Parent Advisory Board to the initiative at the state level. Meanwhile, participating Strengthening Families early care and education centers will use the "Ten Steps to Success" suggestions from the Parents Anonymous Shared Leadership in Action program to include parents more fully. New Jersey's team also plans to create a Parent Newsletter and hold Parent Cafés in the coming year.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Interest in professional development around Strengthening Families is rapidly increasing around New Jersey. During a five-week Strengthening Families Institute, trainers from each of the state's Child Care Resource and Referral entities received in-depth training on the Protective Factors and Program Strategies identified during the research phase of Strengthening Families. Those trainers each in turn trained staff in five child care agencies in their respective networks, which cover the entire state. Since then, many agencies have begun to consider Strengthening Families training to be essential to their professional development requirements.

As interest grows, New Jersey's Strengthening Families team has been asked to make numerous public presentations to diverse audiences, both in government agencies and child care-related conferences around the state.

At least 15 early care and education programs in New Jersey are currently using the Strengthening Families Self Assessment

In 2008, 105 centers will be using the Strengthening Families Self Assessment, reaching approximately 5,250 children.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES

Strengthening Families plays an integral role in several statewide initiatives. The Protective Factors have been written into New Jersey's statewide Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems plan, and Strengthening Families team members regularly participate in BUILD conferences and meetings.

The New Jersey team has also worked to infuse Strengthening Families into the National Governor's Association (NGA) grant of Ready, Set, Grow, the Governor's early childhood systems-building initiative. Terri Buccerelli, New Jersey's coordinator of the NGA grant says, "Effective service coordination and improved service access are among the goals of Ready, Set, Grow, and the expansion of the New Jersey Strengthening Families Initiative...from eight sites to 105 sites, coupled with the training of CCR&R staff to assist the targeted centers in implementing the [Strengthening Families] protocols and to monitor the centers' progress—will enhance the coordination of and access to services for families in those communities..."

Additionally, the Strengthening Families staff is working with the New Jersey Pediatric Council on Research and Education, a new initiative of the American Academy of Pediatrics, New Jersey Chapter, designed to help pediatricians recognize and prevent signs of abuse and neglect among their patients in the primary care setting.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION

The Prevention Subcommittee of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect was one of the early supporters of the Strengthening Families Initiative, encouraging the Office of Child Abuse Prevention to apply for the first round of seed grants through the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds' Early Childhood Initiative. The grant was complemented by additional funds from the Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships (DPCP) to each of the sites piloting Strengthening Families.

The DPCP works solely around the prevention of child abuse and neglect, and Strengthening Families has become one of its signature initiatives. The New Jersey team, housed in the Division, is proposing that Child Abuse Awareness Month in April be renamed and remarketed as "Family Strengthening Month." DPCP has also brought Strengthening Families 32 Family Success Centers in the state working towards a community-based approach to child abuse and neglect prevention.

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Funding, staff time, and in-kind resources for New Jersey's Strengthening Families Initiative have been provided by:

- The State of New Jersey
- New Jersey Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships
- National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds
- Department of Health
- Department of Education
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Children and Families
- Arthur L. Mailman Foundation

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CHILD WELFARE

New Jersey is one of three states receiving funding from the Arthur L. Mailman Foundation to explore and expand linkages between the early childhood community and child welfare. Cross-training of these groups began at the five-week Strengthening Families Institute, where trainers from the Division of Youth and Family Services as well as from the Child Care Resource and Referral entities learned about the issues the other faces when working with families.

Strengthening Families has also been a part of the state's new case practice model in child welfare, which is being piloted in four "immersion counties" across the state. Parent engagement and family teaming are emphasized in this approach. New Jersey's child welfare workers are being trained in the new case practice model in preparation for a statewide rollout.

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