

Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework

The 2015 Children’s Trust Fund Request for Application will focus on the prevention of child abuse and neglect by providing supportive evidence-based or evidence-informed (EB/EI) programs or practices that ultimately strengthen families through the use of five protective factors outlined in the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families™ approach. Ongoing research conducted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy has shown that the presence and prominence of five protective factors in families reduces the likelihood of child abuse and neglect and contributes to excellent outcomes for young children.

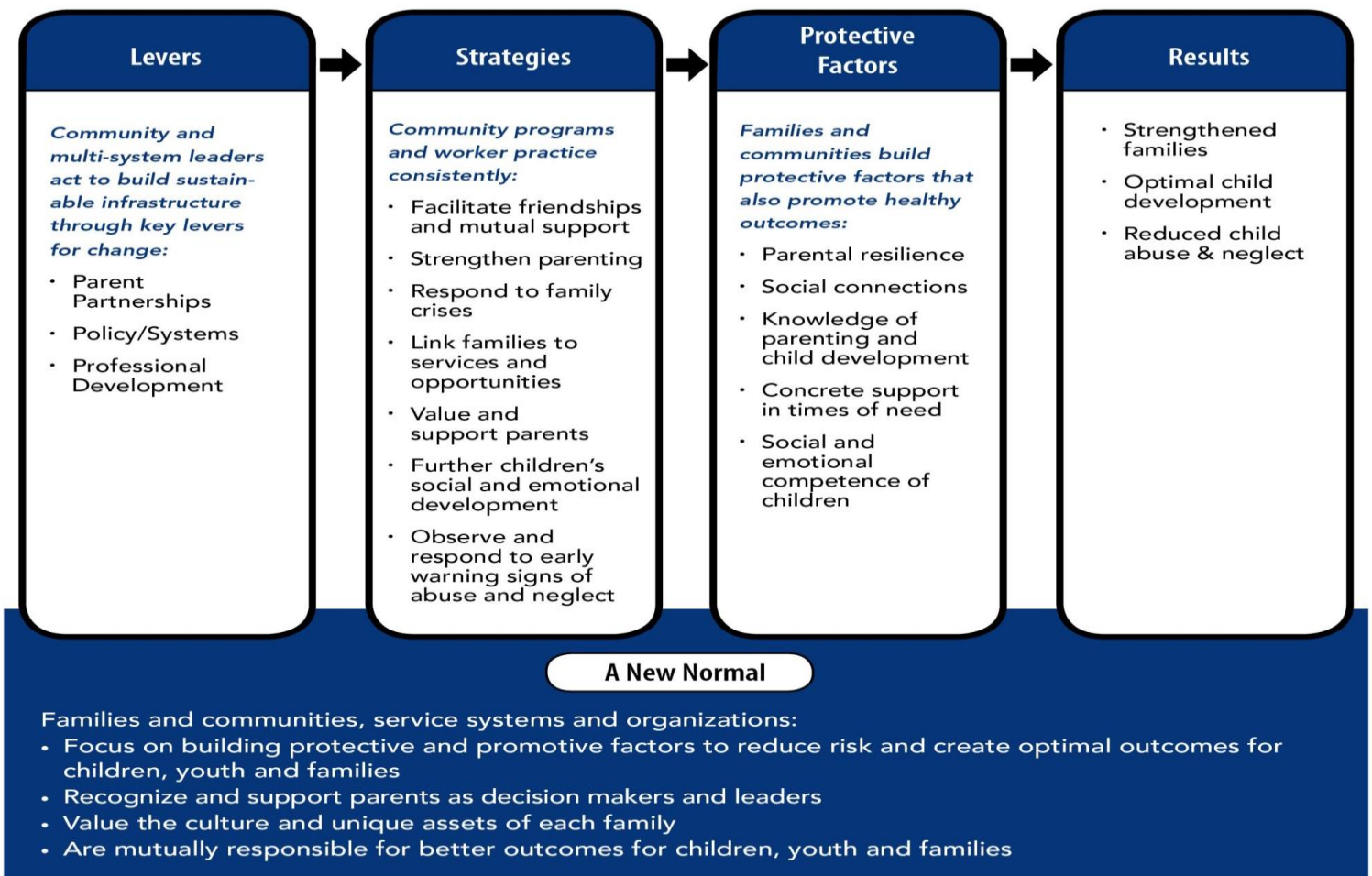
Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors

- **Parental Resilience:** No one can eliminate stress from parenting, but a parent’s capacity for resilience can affect how a parent deals with stress. Resilience is the ability to manage and bounce back from all types of challenges that emerge in every family’s life. It means finding ways to solve problems, building and sustaining trusting relationships including relationships with your own child, and knowing how to seek help when necessary.
- **Social Connections:** Friends, family members, neighbors and community members provide emotional support, help solve problems, offer parenting advice and give concrete assistance to parents. Networks of support are essential to parents and also offer opportunities for people to “give back”, an important part of self- esteem as well as a benefit for the community. Isolated families may need extra help in reaching out to build positive relationships.
- **Concrete Support in Times of Need:** Meeting basic economic needs like food, shelter, clothing and health care is essential for families to thrive. Likewise, when families encounter a crisis such as domestic violence, mental illness or substance abuse, adequate services and supports need to be in place to provide stability, treatment and help for family members to get through the crisis.
- **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** Accurate information about child development and appropriate expectations for children’s behavior at every age help parents see their children and youth in a positive light and promote their healthy development. Information can come from many sources, including family members as well as parent education classes and surfing the internet. Studies show information is most effective when it comes at the precise time parents need it to understand their own children. Parents who experienced harsh discipline or other negative childhood experiences may need extra help to change the parenting patterns they learned as children.
- **Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** A child or youth’s ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate their behavior and effectively communicate their

feelings has a positive impact on their relationships with their family, other adults, and peers. Challenging behaviors or delayed development creates extra stress for families, so early identification and assistance for both parents and children can head off negative results and keep development on track.¹

“In keeping with the goal of focusing on strengths instead of deficits, the Strengthening Families™ approach uses a logic model for reducing child abuse and neglect based on building resiliency rather than reducing risk.”² The logic model that follows was developed by first identifying protective factors that were correlated to optimal child development and child abuse and neglect prevention and then identifying program strategies that build these protective factors.

Strengthening Families: Creating a New Normal



¹ *The Protective Factors Framework*, Center for the Study of Social Policy, Washington, D.C.;

<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/basic-one-pagers/Strengthening-Families-Protective-Factors.pdf>.

² *Protecting Children by Strengthening Families: A Guidebook for Early Childhood Programs*; page 1-5; Center for the Study of Social Policy; Washington, D.C.; April 2004. http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/resources/body/SF_Guidebook_2nd_Ed.pdf.

Under this RFA, EB/EI programs or practices must be utilized that will provide parents with strategies to strengthen their resilience and functioning; deepen their understanding of child development and use of positive learning strategies to guide children's behavior and social/emotional development; and assist in building a network of supports and connections to family and services when in need.

Within the framework of the chosen EB/EI program or practices, applicants must detail the specific methods and experiences that will be used with families that align with the seven strategies identified in the Logic Model as a means of building protective factors and preventing child abuse and neglect. Following are some examples of strategies that can be used within the chosen EB/EI programs or practices to support parents, children and families.

1. Value and support parents

- Support families in effectively building and enhancing positive relationships and interactions between parents and their children and between parents and other adults who care for their children, including fathers and the parents' extended families.
- Serve as a partner with parents in their child's development, learning and education and listen to parents' questions, concerns and opinions.
- Help parents to understand their role as their child's first and most important teacher.
- Help to develop leadership and advocacy skills in parents.
- Provide specific services focused on fathers.
- Provide education and support around typical developmental, academic and social issues that affect adolescents, if working with a teen parent population.

2. Facilitate friendships and mutual support

- Develop strong relationships between the service provider and the parents and children served, as well as the parent's extended family when appropriate.
- Assist parents and families to develop and maintain connections with each other.

3. Strengthen parenting

- Identify and implement activities that engage both parents and children together.
- Model parenting skills and techniques to the parents you will serve.
- Provide information on additional community-based resources and classes on parenting, child development, developmentally appropriate discipline, etc. that are available to the parents and families you will serve.

4. Facilitate children's social and emotional development
 - Provide coaching and mentoring on the development of experiences and activities that support young children's healthy social and emotional growth and development.
 - Mentor parents' use of positive reinforcement and praise with their child.
 - Offer support and training on positive methods of child guidance and behavior.

5. Link families to services and opportunities
 - Be knowledgeable of community-based service agencies including the referral process, funding assistance, and the identification of the best service for specific family needs. This may include, but is not limited to, accessing health insurance, child care and subsidies, Early Intervention, transportation, housing, finance management, domestic/partner violence, sexual abuse.
 - Help parents ensure they are receiving adequate prenatal care while pregnant and pediatric health care for their child once born.
 - Provide reproductive health education to prevent second pregnancies.
 - Assist parents in setting goals to complete their secondary education, obtain higher education, and/or gain employment.
 - Develop a resource library that describes community agencies and the services offered.

6. Respond to families who may be in crisis
 - Be available to parents and their extended family to discuss and seek support for difficult home situations.
 - Describe the importance of confidentiality.
 - Understand the characteristics of high-risk behaviors, as appropriate, in family dynamics.

7. Observe and respond to early warning signs of child abuse or neglect
 - Provide ongoing staff professional development on recognizing child abuse and neglect.
 - Understand the mandated reporter role, including the process for reporting potential abuse or neglect to the authorities and for constructively discussing the situation with young parents and families.