

1. PURPOSE

One of the three priorities that the Alliance has identified for all Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) states during the next year is to strengthen states' primary leadership structures around the Strengthening Families (SF) work and overall strengths and sustainability.

Children's Trust Funds and their Partners' State Strengthening Families Effort

Build state Strengthening Families structure and sustainability

- SF leadership teams
- Parent partnerships
- Protective Factors 101
- Partnerships with early childhood, child welfare and other stakeholders

Increased capacity of stakeholders to incorporate SF/PF/PP's into systems and services for children and families

Increased sustainability of State SF efforts, e.g.,

- Coordination of state efforts
- Funds to sustain efforts
- Shared vision among state leadership team
- Effective engagement of partners to pursue state's SF priorities

2. PURPOSE (continued)

States with strong Strengthening Families leadership teams are more capable of addressing the challenging Theory of Change goal of creating transformational systemic change in the fields of child abuse prevention, early childhood, and other systems that routinely interact with CTFs. Building the strength and capacity of these leadership teams is, therefore, a priority for all members of the ECI Learning Community. As a foundation for the work, each ECI state is asked to assess the health of their state leadership team, identify as a part of their Learning Community Agreement at least one gap, and put into place a work plan to address that gap which will include a "so that" chain.

"Building Strong and Sustainable State Structures for Strengthening Families: A Checklist" is a tool that represents a composite strengths picture for state SF leadership teams. States can use the checklist to assess their own strengths by checking the items that apply to their Strengthening Families state leadership team.

Admittedly, some of the questions may not appear to be a simple yes or no answer, but may present more complex issues. A space for comments will be provided at the end of the checklist. Please use this space to comment upon items in the checklist that you would like to explain further.

3. WHO SHOULD ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON THE CHECKLIST?

At the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds (Alliance), we realize that state structures for Strengthening Families efforts can be complex. The very nature of partnerships calls for multiple areas of leadership. The Alliance works primarily with state leads of Children's Trust Funds (CTFs) in many areas, but representation of parents and early childhood stakeholders are crucial to strong and diverse state structure. These are the types of partnerships that characterize the dynamic and innovative work being done in the Early Childhood Initiative.

From the beginning of Strengthening Families, diverse teams in early care and education programs (directors, staff, parents, etc.) have been encouraged to help complete the Strengthening Families self-assessment. In the same spirit, we encourage multiple members of state teams to answer these questions related to building strong and sustainable state structures for Strengthening Families work.

All that we ask is that you identify your state, and the role that you play in your state. Your answers will not be used to judge you in any way, but will be informative -- both to the Alliance and to your own state leaders -- about ways to link into our larger Early Childhood Initiative Learning Community in order to enrich and equip you in your work.

4. WHAT IS THE TIMELINE TO CONSIDER WHILE ANSWERING THE QUESTION?

Please answer the questions as they pertain to your state Strengthening Families leadership team/stakeholder group since January, 2009.

In May of 2010, you will be asked to revisit the checklist as you reassess your progress in this area.

Now, find a nice, quiet place where you can give some thoughtful consideration to your state's efforts to strengthen families.



1. Please identify your state and explain the role that you play as a stakeholder in your state's Strengthening Families work:

State

Role

2. Please describe and/or comment on any written documentation that utilizes the five protective factors as a common framework across all stakeholders' primary areas of concern:

State Prevention Plan

State ECCS Plan

Mission Statement for Stakeholder Group

Other

3. Is the written documentation referred to in Question #1 -- reviewed on a regular basis?

Yes

No

4. Are there prioritized goals and objectives with timelines that reinforce the following:

	Yes	No
Identified services that support and strengthen families;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identified strategies to integrate Strengthening Families and Protective Factors into systems work, including setting policies that help families build Protective Factors;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identified strategies to integrate the Protective Factors into programs and services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Are there long range plans, with clear benchmarks to indicate progress toward goals? [These should be three years or longer using logic model, theory of change, or written document that identifies strategies that shift thinking about prevention from a risk model to a strengths-based model.]

Yes

No

6. Choose the structure that applies to your state SF stakeholder group:

State SF team/stakeholder group is separate entity

State SF team/stakeholder group is combined with existing entity

6. SF LEADERSHIP COMBINED WITH PRE-EXISTING GROUPS

There are many advantages to be gained when it is possible to combine state SF efforts with stakeholder groups that already exist, especially when the purposes of the pre-existing group resonate with the Strengthening Families Protective Factor Framework. Groups like ECCS Steering Committees, Early Childhood Cabinets, etc. often represent the levers for change that are such an important part of the SF work. When a pre-existing structure IS the SF structure for a state, it is important to give adequate focus to the five protective factors. This will assure that there is a way to build the evidence base for strengthening families.

1. Is there provision for a distinct and separate meeting time that deals specifically with Strengthening Families planning and strategies?

Yes

No

2. Is there a provision for adding representation for the "Strengthening Families" portion of your state's work -- to the pre-existing group (such as additional parent representation, early care and education providers and other representation that may not be included on the pre-existing steering body)?

Yes

No

1. Are there regular and consistent meetings?

Yes

No

2. Are meeting minutes, including action plan, recorded and distributed?

Yes

No

3. Are state efforts coordinated and do the partners share implementation responsibilities (one person is not doing all the work)?

Yes

No

4. Is consistent funding available to sustain efforts?

Yes

No

5. Are funding and other sources of support (i.e. dedicated staff, in-kind support etc) diversified as a result of the leadership team's efforts?

Yes

No

6. Is there a formal evaluation component that identifies related outcomes and measures to document changes as a result of Strengthening Families and Protective Factors?

Yes

No

7. Are all early childhood partners in the state invited and included to support the work?

Yes

No

8. Are partners engaged (attending meetings regularly and participating in discussions, work projects, etc.)?

Yes

No

9. Are parents included as partners in all aspects of the work?

Yes

No

10. Which partners are currently on your Strengthening Family team?

- AAP or Pediatricians
- Attorney General's Office
- CBCAP State Lead Agency Representative
- CDA Steering Committee Representative
- Child Care Provider Association
- Child Care Resource and Referral Agency
- Child Welfare Agency
- Departments of Education
- Domestic Violence Prevention
- Early Childhood Mental Health System
- Early Intervention (IDEA - Part C)
- Education (Part B of IDEA)
- Environment Rating Scale Trainers/Monitors
- Family Resource Network
- Governor's Office
- Head Start State Collaboration Office
- Higher Education Institution
- Home Visiting Programs
- Infant and Toddler (I/T) Specialists
- Law Enforcement
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Affiliates
- Parent(s) Representative(s)
- Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC)
- Pre-Kindergarten Administrator
- Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) state committee or early care and education quality initiative representative
- State Child Care Development Block Grant Administrator
- State Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Initiative
- Early Care and Education Career Lattice (Professional Development System) Representative
- Substance Abuse Prevention
- Other (please specify)

11. Please add your comments

8. Thank you for spending some time to think about building strong and sustain...

We hope that this checklist will prove to be helpful during this next year as you seek to collaborate with all of your state partners more effectively in order to strengthen families.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss any issues further that might have arisen as you worked through the questions.

I look forward to the process as we consider together ways in which the Alliance can help you in your work to strengthen families.

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