

mapping your state's strengthening families initiative

As we prepare for the Strengthening Families Leadership Summit, we take this opportunity to look back on the development of this initiative in states across the country. 30 states are working to embed the Protective Factors into systems, policies, and programs that help children and families, and while the goals of preventing maltreatment and promoting optimal development are deeply aligned, the approaches to achieving those goals vary from state-to-state. This mapping exercise for state teams will allow you to chart the pathway that your initiative has taken, marking the moments that inspired, challenged, and accelerated the Strengthening Families work. The exercise gives you the opportunity to reflect on your initiative's development and identify the people and events that have contributed to your progress. You will be invited to share your map at the Summit, where we will analyze the development of Strengthening Families across states, identifying common patterns that can inform future work.

MATERIALS

If you are doing this exercise on paper, you will need the following materials:

- Mapping Exercise Legend
- Large sheet of paper (butcher paper or flip chart paper)
- Icon stickers
- Markers
- Digital camera

If you are doing this exercise on a computer, you will need the following materials:

- Mapping Exercise Legend
- Zip file with icon image files
- Power Point or another suitable program



INSTRUCTIONS

The Strengthening Families initiative map is meant to be created collaboratively. Gather the core members of your team to discuss how to build a map that will represent all of the components of your work, including obstacles you have encountered, surprising events that changed the course of the initiative, and other events that demonstrate how your work developed. Play with different orientations of the icons until you have come to consensus on the layout of your map. Each state will present ONE map at the Summit.

Use the following questions to guide your conversation, and make sure to have someone charting the discussion so you can capture your thoughts on your map. You may even want to sketch out a few drafts of your map on a whiteboard or flip chart during the conversation.

- What was taking place to support children and families in the state before Strengthening Families got started?
- How did Strengthening Families get started in the state?
- What did it take to get your initiative to where it is today?
- Who has helped move the work?
- Where did areas of work come together? Where did they diverge?
- What were the challenges that were encountered, and could they be surmounted?
- What were the goals of the initiative when you began? Did you achieve them?

- Did you achieve anything you didn't expect?
- What are the goals of the initiative now?

Your map may be simple or complex, depending on the development of your state's initiative. States attending the Summit for the first time may have only one or two icons on their maps, while states that have been implementing multi-system Strengthening Families approaches for years may have multiple pathways and many icons.

You are encouraged to be creative in developing a map that best represents the many facets of your state's work. Include unexpected opportunities, successes, dead ends, and any other moments that describe what has happened in your state since Strengthening Families began.

If you are doing the exercise on paper:

On a large piece of paper, use the icon stickers provided in this packet to produce your map. Draw arrows between the icons to show the progression from one to another. Next to each icon, write a note about what is represented. For example, if you use the "Product/Policy" icon, write the specific name of the piece and why it was important. If you need more space, create a Word document for additional comments.

Once you have completed your map, take several pictures of it with a digital camera. *Make sure that the details – including the icons and the notes – are discernable in the pictures.* If necessary, take a few pictures of the whole map as well as close-ups of particular sections.

E-mail your pictures to Kate Stepleton at kate.stepleton@cssp.org, and bring your map to the Strengthening Families Leadership Summit in October.

If you are doing the exercise on the computer:

Using Power Point or another program with similar capacities, create your map by inserting the appropriate image files from the zip file. Connect the icons with arrows, and insert text boxes next to the icons to note what each one represents. For example, if you use the "Product/Policy" icon, write the specific name of the piece and why it was important. If you need more space, use the notes section for the slide for additional comments.

Once you have completed your map and saved it, e-mail it to Kate Stepleton at kate.stepleton@cssp.org.

DEADLINE

Please submit your map by September 30, 2009. We will be in touch with you during September to provide any support your team needs in completing this exercise.

