

Protective Factors for Strengthening Families



A group of young children are playing soccer on a green field. In the foreground, a child in a red and blue jacket and a striped beanie is seen from the back. Other children in various colorful jackets are scattered around, some looking down at the ball. A soccer ball is on the grass in the lower left. In the background, there is a white goalpost and a green fence.

Goals

- Provide an overview of the Protective Factor Framework.
- Review the five Protective Factors.
- Recognize Protective Factors **ALREADY** in your everyday actions
- Move from knowledge to everyday actions that help families build protective factors.



What draws you to this work/role?

The 4 Big Ideas

Behind the Protective Factor Framework for Strengthening Families

- Building protective and promotive factors, not just reducing risk
- An approach – not a model, a program or a curriculum
- A changed relationship with parents
- Aligning practice with developmental science

Big Idea #1

A Protective Factor Approach

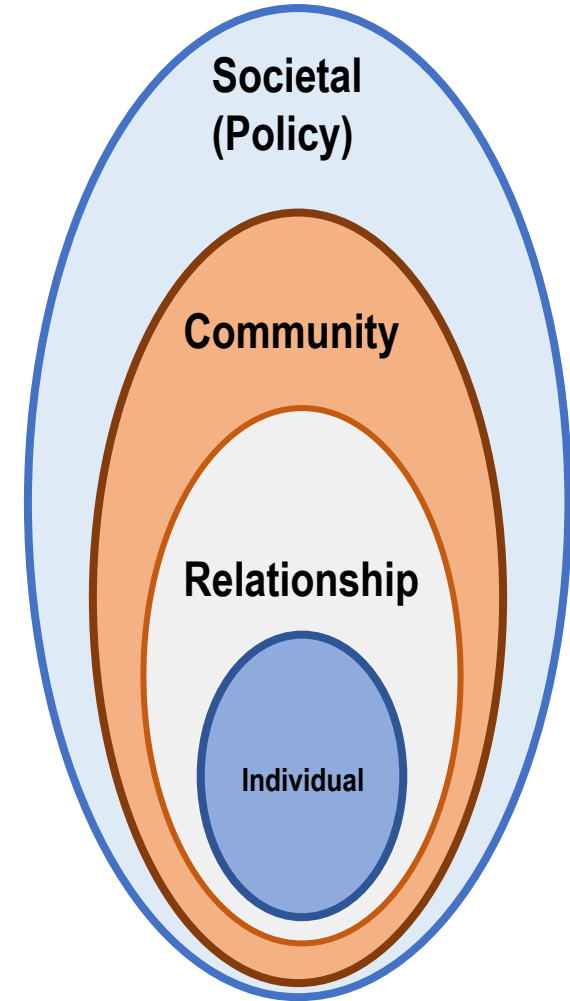
- Protective Factors: conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk
- Promotive Factors: conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that actively enhance well-being



Big Idea #1

A Protective Factor Approach

- Protective Factors: conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk
- Promotive Factors: conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that actively enhance well-being



Big Idea # 2

An Approach, Not a Model

- Research-based and evidence-informed
- Applied in any setting that serves young children and their families
- Implemented through small but significant changes
- Not parallel to, but integrated into existing practice
- Cross-sector implementation as core to the approach



Big Idea # 3

A Changed Relationship with Parents

- Engaging parents as partners
- Support and involve parents
- Parents as leaders



Big Idea # 4

Alignment with Developmental Science

Research tells us to pay attention to:

- Critical periods of development – early childhood and adolescence
- Importance of nurturing relationships in early childhood
- Effects of trauma on development, behavior and outcomes



THINK
ABOUT
THINGS
DIFFERENTLY



A multi-generational family portrait featuring a young man, an elderly man, a woman, and several children of various ages. The image is dimmed with a dark grey overlay to make the white and green text stand out.

THE 5 PROTECTIVE FACTORS

from the Strengthening Families initiative of the Center for the Study of Social Policy

A photograph of a woman and a child in winter clothing. The woman has long brown hair and is wearing a blue quilted jacket. The child is wearing a white knit hat with blue patterns and a blue quilted jacket. They are standing outdoors with trees in the background. A semi-transparent yellow banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text 'PARENTAL RESILIENCE' in white and black capital letters.

PARENTAL RESILIENCE

NO ONE

can eliminate stress
from parenting.

**But a parent's
capacity for
resilience can
affect how he or
she deals with
stress.**

**Resilience is
the ability to
manage and
bounce
back from
all types of
challenges
that emerge
in every
family's life.**



As a Protective Factor

RESILIENCE

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.



Parental Resilience

Everyday Actions

- **Demonstrate in multiple ways that parents are valued**
- **Honor each family's race, language, culture, history and approach to parenting**
- **Encourage parents to manage stress effectively**
- **Support parents as decision-makers and help build decision-making and leadership skills**
- **Help parents understand how to buffer their child during stressful times**

Being a joyful parent also has its challenges. It is caused by the placement of their children.

- typical to a crying child
- uneasiness or discomfort
- prolonged individual trauma
- social feelings
- communication
- a need

Numbers show that parents are important in the outcome of their children. Parents favorably influence resilience and fun challenges.

Some studies easily show examples of a child's life. But some are not. For example, development of a child's parents call for more time to their effects on character.

Demonstrate self-efficiency.

PARENTAL RESILIENCE: ACTION SHEET

Your role

Your daily interactions with parents can help them to build their resilience and their belief in themselves as parents and capable decision-makers. You can:

- Projecting a positive and strengths-based approach to all families
- Support parents as key decision-makers for their families and provide opportunities for decision-making that affects the program or community
- Encourage parents to take care of themselves, particularly during stressful times
- Normalize the fact that parenting is stressful and help the parent plan proactively about how to respond to stressful parenting situations
- Validate and support good decisions

Questions to ask

- Where do you draw your strength?
- How does this help you in parenting?
- What are your dreams for yourself and family?
- What kind of worries and frustrations do you deal with during the day? How do you solve them?
- How are you able to meet your children's needs when you are stressed?
- How does your spouse, partner, or closest friend support you? When you are under stress, what is most helpful?
- What do you do to take care of yourself when you are stressed?

What to look for

- Problem solving skills
- Ability to cope with stress
- Self-care strategies
- Help-seeking behavior
- Receiving mental health or substance abuse services if needed
- Not allowing stress to impact parenting

Activities to do with parents

- Ask the parent to write down their self-care strategies and ensure that they are taking time for self-care each day.
- Ask the parent to identify situations they find stressful and make a plan in advance for how they will keep themselves calm and centered in these circumstances.

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What are you already doing to help build Parental Resilience?

Use the link to find the “sticky note” document. Create a sticky note and share something you are doing to help build parental resilience.

A vibrant, multi-generational group of people are gathered around an outdoor table, enjoying a meal. In the foreground, a man with a shaved head and a woman with dark hair are smiling warmly at each other. Behind them, a young boy in a red shirt is also smiling. To the right, an older man with white hair is partially visible. The table is set with plates of food, including what appears to be fried chicken, and glasses of water. The background is filled with lush green foliage, suggesting a park or garden setting. A semi-transparent green banner with the text "SOCIAL CONNECTIONS" is overlaid across the middle of the image.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

FRIENDS FAMILY NEIGHBORS COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- provide emotional support
- help solve problems
- offer parenting advice
- give concrete assistance to parents

Social isolation is a risk factor associated with disengaged parenting, maternal depression and increased likelihood of child maltreatment.



As a Protective Factor

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

help parents have a sense of connectedness. They believe they have people who care about them. They feel confident that they have others with whom they can share the joy, pain and uncertainties that come with parenting. They can count on others when faced with challenges, and they feel empowered to “give back” through satisfying, mutually beneficial relationships.





STRANGERS

IN A

BALL PIT

Social Connections

Everyday Actions

- **Help families value, build, sustain and use social connections**
- **Create an inclusive environment**
- **Facilitate mutual support**
- **Promote engagement in the community and participation in community activities**

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SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: ACTION SHEET

Your role

You can help parents to think critically about their social network and how they could utilize it more effectively, as well as the skills and tools they need to expand it. The following strategies may assist you in engaging families in developing social connections:

- Model good relational behavior and use your interactions with families as an opportunity to help parents develop stronger relational skills
- When engaging the family's broader network in teaming or other supports, be sensitive to the quality of existing relationships and help the family identify supporters in their network who will contribute positively
- Invite parents to events where they can get to know each other – with or without their kids – and reach out especially to those parents that may be socially isolated
- If there are specific issues that serve as barriers for the family in developing healthy social connections such as anxiety or depression, encourage the family to address them

Questions to ask

- Do you have friends or family members that help you out once in a while?
- Are you a member of any groups or organizations?
- Who can you call for advice or just to talk? How often do you see them?
- What kind of social support do you need?
- Do you find it easy or challenging to make friends? If it is challenging, what specific things represent a barrier for you?
- What helps you feel connected?

What to look for

- Does the parent have supportive relationships with one or more persons (friends, family, neighbors, community, faith-based organizations, etc.)?
- Can the parent turn to their social network for help in times of need (for instance, when they need help with transportation, childcare or other resources)?
- Is the parent willing and able to accept assistance from others?
- Does the parent have positive relationships with other parents of same-age kids?
- Does the parent have skills for establishing and maintaining social relationships?
- Does the parent provide reciprocal social support to peers?

Activities to do with parents

- Work with the parent to develop an EcoMap showing the people and institutions that are sources of support and/or stress in his or her life.
- Role play with the parent to help them practice skills in approaching another parent to develop a friendship. Have the parent choose a realistic scenario such as starting a conversation at a

HEET

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What are you already doing to help build Social Connections?

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KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

NO ONE IS THE “PERFECT PARENT.”

All parents, and those who work with children, can benefit from increasing their knowledge of child development, including:

- physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development
- signs indicating a child may have a developmental delay
- cultural factors that influence parenting practices and the perception of children
- factors that promote or inhibit healthy child outcomes
- discipline and how to positively impact child behavior

An understanding of parenting strategies and child development helps parents understand what to expect and how to provide what children need during each developmental phase.



As a Protective Factor

KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

means seeking and using accurate information about: parental behaviors that lead to early secure attachments; the importance of being attuned and emotionally available, nurturing, reliable, responsive and predictable; setting routines; providing a physically and emotionally safe environment; using positive discipline techniques; and recognizing and attending to the special needs of a child



Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development

Everyday Actions

- **Model developmentally appropriate interactions with children**
- **Provide information and resources on parenting and child development**
- **Encourage parents to observe, ask questions, explore parenting issues and try out new strategies**
- **Address parenting issues from a strength-based perspective**

No parent knows or is a "perfect" parent. Parenting strategies that help parents understand how to provide care for each child develop those who work to increase their child's development.

- physical, cognitive, emotional
- signs indicating development
- cultural factors and practices
- factors that affect outcomes
- discipline and behavior

Gaining more information about development and parenting are part of recent advances in pediatrics and Science. In the evidence of the childhood as it is for intellectual development, numerous research is determined by environments and brain development.

Developing brain activity and a variety of activities. Developing brain emotionally and physically. Caregivers who respond to the child and nurture their development and the child and their secure attachment, safe, gain self-regulation in their environment and secure base.

KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT: ACTION SHEET

Your role

Each contact you have with the family provides an important opportunity to link them to parenting resources, provide child development information and model and validate effective caregiving. You can:

- Connect parents to parenting education classes or home visiting as appropriate for their situation
- Model appropriate expectations for the child
- Engage parents in dialogue when their expectations are not in line with the child's developmental phase
- Underline the importance of nurturing care to help the parent in valuing the importance of their own role
- Provide "just in time" parenting education: crucial information a parent needs at the time when parenting issues arise
- Help the parent identify a series of trusted informants that they can turn to when they need parenting information

Questions to ask

- What does your child do best and what do you like about your child?
- What do you like about parenting? What do you find challenging about parenting?
- How have you learned about parenting skills?
- How do you continue to learn about your child's development?
- What has helped you learn about yourself as a parent?
- Are there things that worry you about your child's development or behavior?
- Have other people expressed concern about your child?

What to look for

- Does the parent understand and encourage healthy development?
- Is the parent able to respond and manage their child's behavior?
- Does the parent understand and demonstrate age-appropriate parenting skills in their expectations, discipline, communication, protection and supervision of their child?
- Does the child respond positively to the caregivers' approaches?
- Does the parent understand and value their parenting role?
- Does the parent have a reliable source for parenting information when issues come up?
- Does the parent know how to encourage social-emotional development and apply a range of age-appropriate disciplinary strategies?
- Is the parent involved in their child's school, preschool or other activities?
- Does the parent understand the child's specific needs (especially if the child has special developmental or behavioral needs)?

Activities to do with parents

- Ask the parent what their hopes and dreams are for their child(ren). Discuss any worries the parent has about ensuring those hopes and dreams are met. Then discuss what the parent is doing today (or wants to do) to help achieve those hopes and dreams.

KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT: ACTION SHEET

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engage with the child's developmental phase and underline the importance of their own role in parenting issues

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What has helped you learn about yourself as a parent?

Are there things that worry you about your child's development, discipline, communication, protection and supervision of their child?

Have other people expressed concern about your child?
Does the parent understand and encourage healthy development?

Does the parent understand and manage their child's behavior?
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Does the parent know how to encourage social-emotional development and apply a range of age-appropriate disciplinary strategies?



What are you already doing to help build Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development?

Use the link to find the “sticky note” document. Create a sticky note and share something you are doing to help build Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development.



CONCRETE SUPPORT **IN TIMES OF NEED**

ALL PARENTS NEED HELP SOMETIMES.

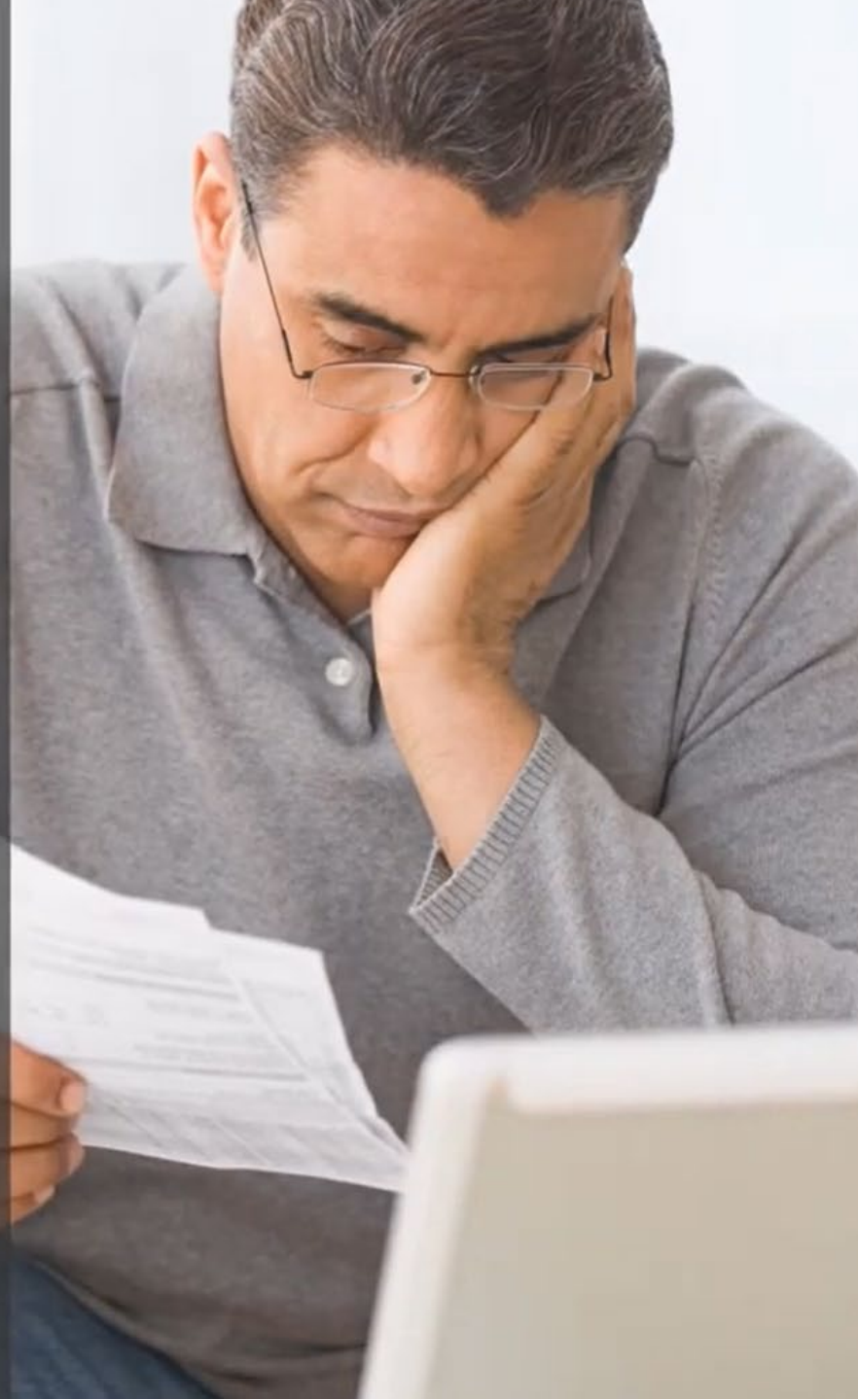
Meeting basic needs like food, shelter, clothing and health care is essential for families to thrive.

When families encounter a crisis, adequate services and supports need to be in place to provide stability, treatment and help for family members to get through it.

When parents face stressful conditions they need to seek help.

But for some, asking for help is hard. Parents need experiences that enable them to understand their rights to services, and they need to learn how to navigate through service systems.

Seeking help is a step toward improving one's circumstances and becoming resilient.





As a Protective Factor

CONCRETE SUPPORT IN TIMES OF NEED

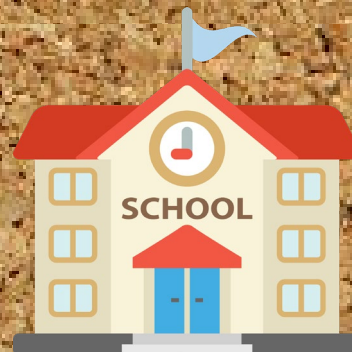
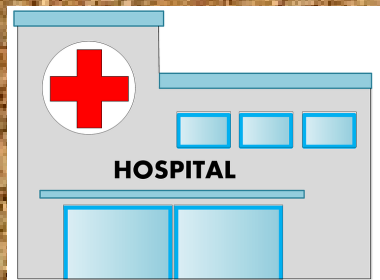
means being resourceful and able to identify, find and receive the basic necessities everyone deserves (e.g., healthy food, a safe environment), as well as specialized medical, mental health, social, educational or legal services when needed. It means understanding one's rights in accessing services and seeking help when needed.

Concrete Supports in Times of Need

Everyday Actions

- **Respond immediately when families are in crisis**
- **Provide information and connections to services in the community**
- **Help families to develop skills and tools they need to identify their needs and connect to supports**

community





All parents need help sometime the day-to-day care of children, but how to soothe a colicky baby to the emergency room when a happens, help in managing one when fatigued or upset. When parents with very trying conditions such as home foreclosure, substance abuse, or trauma, are unable to feed their family or trauma, access to concrete support and help to address their needs and help to stress caused by very difficult challenges. Assisting parents to receive concrete support in times of need to ensure they and their family have the necessities everyone deserves in times of need (e.g., healthy food, a safe environment, specialized medical, mental health, educational or legal services).

When parents are faced with overwhelming stressful conditions they need to know how to ask for help but for some parents asking for help is not an easy thing to do. It may be embarrassing for some parents because it feels like they are incompetent; that they don't know how to solve their own problems or that they are a burden to their family. Other parents may not ask for help because they don't know where to go or the services needed have a stigma associated with them such as mental health services, domestic violence or homelessness. Parents need experiences that help them understand their rights in accessing services, gain knowledge of relevant services, and how to navigate through service systems. Family and child-serving programs can help communicate to parents that seeking help is not an indicator of weakness or failure. On the contrary, seeking help is a sign of strength and improving one's circumstances to better manage stress and function. When faced with challenges, ask for help. When parents ask for help, they are toward building resilience.

CONCRETE SUPPORT IN TIMES OF NEED: ACTION SHEET

Your role

As a professional working with families, your role is not just to provide referrals to needed services, but to identify any barriers the families may have in accessing those services. Helping families overcome those barriers is crucial to ensuring that their concrete needs are met. Such help may entail:

- Encouraging help seeking behavior
- Working with the family to understand their past experience with service systems and any stigma they attach to certain services
- Helping the family to navigate complex systems by explaining eligibility requirements, filling out forms or making a warm handoff to an individual who can help them negotiate getting access to the services they need
- Helping the parent understand their role as an advocate for themselves and their child
- Giving parents opportunities to help meet concrete needs of other families in the program or the community, to encourage reciprocity

Questions to ask when a family is in need

- What do you need to _____ (stay in your house, keep your job, pay your heating bill etc.)?
- What have you done to handle the problem? Has this worked?
- Are there community groups or local services that you have worked with in the past? What has been your experience accessing their services?
- Are there specific barriers that have made it difficult for you to access services in the past?
- How does dealing with these issues impact the way you parent?

What to look for

- Is the parent open to accessing and utilizing services?
- Has the parent had positive experiences with services in the past?
- Does the parent have specific barriers (literacy, lack of transportation, etc.) that will make it difficult to access services?
- Are there personal behavioral traits (e.g., punctuality, willingness to share personal information, etc.) that the parent could address to more effectively utilize services?
- Does the parent try to buffer the child from the stress caused by the family's concrete needs?

Activities to do with parents

- Ask the parent to identify one concrete need that, if met, would lighten his or her burden. Come up with a list of at least three possible avenues to get that need met (e.g., agencies to approach, people to ask for help, cutting back on other expenses).
- Talk to the parent about what their family's socioeconomic status was in their childhood and what effect that had on them. Discuss things their parents did or did not do to buffer them from the stress of poverty, to teach them the value of money or to make sure their needs were met.

ACTION SHEET

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What are you already doing to help connect
parents to concrete supports?

Use the link to find the
“sticky note” document.
Create a sticky note and
share something you are
doing connect parents
to concrete supports?.

A photograph of a man and a young boy looking at a book together. The man is on the left, leaning over the book, and the boy is on the right, looking at the book. The book is open, showing colorful illustrations. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN

EARLY CHILDHOOD IS A PERIOD OF BOTH GREAT OPPORTUNITY & VULNERABILITY.

Helping children develop social-emotional competence allows them to manage their emotions and build healthy relationships with their peers and adults.

A growing body of research has demonstrated a strong link between young children's social-emotional competence and their cognitive development, language skills, mental health and school success.





As a Protective Factor

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN

refers to family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to use words and language skills, interact positively with others, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships with others

Social & Emotional Competence of Children

Everyday Actions

- **Help parents foster their child's social emotional development**
- **Model nurturing care to children**
- **Include children's social and emotional development activities in programming**
- **Help children develop a positive cultural identity and interact in a diverse society**
- **Respond proactively when social or emotional development needs extra support**

Early childhood is an opportunity and a challenge. Experiences set the focus on building skills in an effort to prepare for school. However, a body of research links the link between your competence and the language skills, mental health success. The dimensions of competence in early childhood are:

- self-esteem - confidence
- self-confidence - challenges and environments
- self-efficacy - performing an action
- self-regulation - controlling impulses based on the situation
- personal agency - purposeful action
- executive function - task and avoid
- patience - learn
- persistence - try first attempts
- conflict resolution - in a peaceful way
- communication - expressing a range of emotions
- empathy - understand the emotions of others
- social skills - interact along with others
- morality - learn right and wrong

These dimensions of competence do not exist in isolation. They are part of social-emotional health or unhealthy of nurturing attachment experiences. Show that a relationship and attuned adult

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN: ACTION SHEET

Your role

It is important to increase parents' awareness of the importance of early relationships and of their role in nurturing their child's social-emotional development by:

- Providing concrete tips and resources to parents to help them build their skills
- Modeling developmentally appropriate interactions with children that help them to recognize and manage their emotions and build other social and emotional skills
- Connecting families to resources that can help support their children's social-emotional development—these might be simple (such as classes like Second Step, or books and games that help children to name or recognize their emotions) or more intensive (such as mental health counseling)
- Staying attuned to trauma and how it impacts the child's behaviors and relationships, including taking time to explain and discuss children's behavior with parents when they are "acting out" due to trauma

Questions to ask

- How is the emotional relationship between you and your child?
- How do you express love and affection to your child?
- How do you help your child express his or her emotions?
- In what situations are your child's emotions hard for you to deal with?

What to look for

- Does the child feel safe to express emotions in the relationship with the parent?
- Is the parent emotionally responsive to the child?
- Does the parent model empathy?
- Does the parent set clear expectations and limits (e.g., "People in our family don't hurt each other")?
- Does the parent separate emotions from actions (e.g., "It's okay to be angry, but we don't hit someone when we are angry")?
- Does the parent encourage and reinforce social skills such as greeting others and taking turns?
- Does the parent create opportunities for children to solve problems? (e.g., "What do you think you should do if another child calls you a bad name?")?

Activities to do with parents

- Have the parent sketch out (or write out) an interaction with their child. Begin with an experience that typically makes the child happy, sad, frustrated or angry. Then have the parent illustrate or describe what the child does when he or she feels those emotions, how the parent responds and how the child responds. Identify and talk through positive or negative patterns in the interaction.
- Ask the parent to think of an adult who they loved as a child. What was it about the relationship with that adult that made it so important? Ask them what elements of that relationship they can replicate in their relationship with their child(ren).

OF CHILDREN: ACTION SHEET

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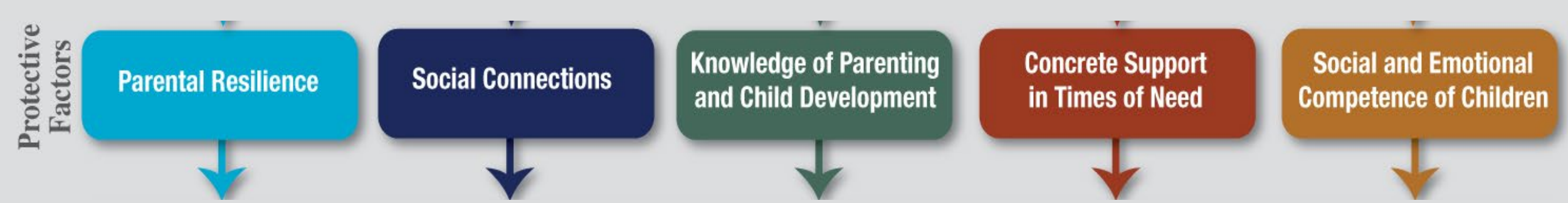
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What are you already doing to help build Social and Emotional Competence of Children?

Use the link to find the “sticky note” document. Create a sticky note and share something you are doing to help build Social and Emotional Competence of Children.



Which one of the Protective Factors are you feeling **most comfortable with?**

Meaning, which do you think will be easiest to implement, recognize, or teach to others?

Discuss why you chose that Protective Factor and any ideas you have around it.

Which one of the Protective Factors are you feeling **most challenged by?**

Meaning, which do you think will be more difficult to implement, recognize, or teach to others?

Discuss why you chose that Protective Factor and any ideas you have around it.



Big Idea # 2

An Approach, Not a Model

- Research-based and evidence-informed
- **Applied in any setting that serves young children and their families**
- **Implemented through small but significant changes**
- **Not parallel to, but integrated into existing practice**
- **Cross-sector implementation as core to the approach**



Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) has developed materials to help support implementation and explain why building protective factors in families should be important to multiple disciplines including:

- **Early Childhood Education**
- **Child Abuse Prevention**
- **Child Welfare**
- **Foster Parents**
- **Kinship Providers**
- **Community Based Family Serving Organizations**
- **Businesses**
- **Educators**
- **Primary Health Partners**



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF: TIPS FOR KINSHIP CARE PROVIDERS

Taking in a child who needs you can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life – but it can also be stressful for you and the rest of your family. Whether you are a formal kinship care provider in the child welfare system, or you informally agree to care for the child of a family member, you play a vital role. Taking care of yourself is critically important, for your own well-being and for the well-being of the child you're caring for and others in your household.

For a child, being removed from their parents and home is stressful and can be traumatic. Even when you provide loving care, a child may have difficulty adjusting. They likely miss their parents and their home. This very natural and normal reaction can make it hard for them to respond positively to you and may impact their behavior in many ways.

This tool is designed to help you:

- reflect on your experience as a kinship care provider
- identify your strengths and where you may need more support
- be aware of how traumatic experiences may affect the child in your care and how that might impact you as a caregiver
- respond to the child in a supportive way even when their behavior is challenging

If you have a caseworker, therapist or close friend you rely on for support, you may want to discuss this information with that person so they can support you as you care for this child. You may also want to share it with other family members to help them understand what you can do to best support the child and

yourself. If you are caring for more than one child, it may be helpful to reflect on the tips and questions in relation to each child separately. Even siblings may react differently to a situation like this, depending on their ages, personalities and individual experiences.

Strengthening Families

Strengthening Families is an effort to help families give their children what they need to thrive. All families have unique strengths, and all families sometimes need help to stay strong.

Strengthening Families is built around five "protective factors." Protective factors are strengths families rely on, especially when life gets difficult. A parallel set of protective and promotive factors, called Youth Thrive, describes what adolescents and young adults need to thrive – but for this tool, the focus is on you as a caregiver. The protective factors discussed in this tool are:

- Parental resilience: *Be strong, even when you're stressed*
- Social connections: *Get and give support*
- Knowledge of parenting and child development: *Learn more so you can parent better*
- Concrete support in times of need: *Get help when you need it*
- Children's social-emotional competence: *Help your child learn to care for themselves and others*

For more information, visit www.strengtheningfamilies.net.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF: TIPS FOR FOSTER AND RESOURCE PARENTS

Taking in a child who needs you can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life – but it can also be stressful for you and the rest of your family. Taking care of yourself is critically important, for your own well-being and for the well-being of the child you're caring for and others in your household.

For a child, being removed from their parents and home is stressful and can be traumatic. Between the experiences that led to their placement in your home, and the removal itself, the child you are caring for is very likely to exhibit some signs of trauma. Even when you provide loving care, a child may have difficulty adjusting. They likely miss their parents and their home. This very natural and normal reaction can make it hard for them to respond positively to you and may impact their behavior in many ways.

This tool is designed to help you:

- reflect on your experience as a foster or resource parent
- identify your strengths and where you may need more support
- be aware of how traumatic experiences may affect the child in your care and how that might impact you as a caregiver
- respond to the child in a supportive way even when their behavior is challenging

If you have a caseworker, therapist or close friend you rely on for support, you may want to discuss this information with that person so they can support you as you care for this child. You may also want to share it with other family members to help you all focus on what you can do to best support the child and each other.

Please note that throughout this document, to keep it simple, we refer to a single child in your care. If you are caring for more than one child, it may be helpful to reflect on the tips and questions in relation to each child separately. Even siblings may react differently to a situation like this, depending on their ages, personalities and individual experiences.

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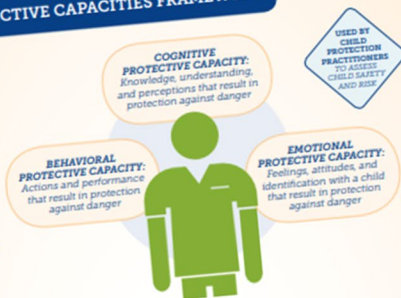
Protective Capacities and Protective Factors: Common Ground for Protecting Children and Strengthening Families



Child welfare practitioners use varied but complementary frameworks for assessing child safety and working with families. A shared understanding of definitions and common ground can help strengthen consistency in services for families.

PROTECTIVE CAPACITIES FRAMEWORK

Protective capacities¹ are caregiver characteristics directly related to child safety. A caregiver with these characteristics ensures the safety of his or her child and responds to threats in ways that keep the child safe from harm. Building protective capacities contributes to a reduction in risk.



PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

Protective factors² are conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that reduce risk and promote healthy development and well-being of children and families, today and in the future.



CENTER FOR THE STUDY
OF SOCIAL POLICY'S

strengthening families
A PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Putting Protective Factors into Play for Yourself

Child welfare work is hard. When you spend all day working with families who need a lot of support, it can be difficult to focus on your own well-being. One of the best things about the Protective Factors Framework is that it applies to everyone – including you and your family! Thinking about how to put protective factors into play in your own life can help you keep going in the face of the daily challenges of doing child welfare work.

Personal Resilience

What do you do to take care of yourself? Try to plan ahead of time so that when you are having a bad day you can:

- Do something that helps you to relax, feel calm and take your mind off of the stress you are experiencing.
- Take a break if you need it (this can be as simple as asking your partner to make dinner or a friend to take care of the kids, or taking a personal day from work).
- Remind yourself of why you do this work. Reflect on what drew you to social work as a career and what you want to achieve for children and families in your community through your work.
- Take time to remember the impact you have made in the lives of others – through your work, in your extended family, in your neighborhood or in your community.
- Get help from a supervisor or a coworker if you need it.
- Find a way on an ongoing basis to release the emotional stress related to the work. Allow yourself physical & emotional enhancers. Take care of yourself by eating well, getting rest, creating separation from work. Identify actions that help you to decompress.
- Recognize your own humanness and learn ways to separate who you are as a person from what the job requires you to do.

Social Connections

Are there people in your life who can support you during rough times and help you recharge outside of work? Make sure that you benefit from positive relationships with others:

- Cultivate a supportive environment at work so that you and your coworkers have time to get to know each other and can turn to each other for support when needed.
- Spend time with family, spiritual groups, clubs, hobbies, sports, recreation or any other activity that removes you from the stress of work. Look into joining groups or organizations as a way to meet new people. Book clubs, school organizations, religious communities or clubs focused on a hobby you enjoy can be great places to start.
- When you're having a tough day due to backlog on cases or a particularly challenging family, don't hesitate to reach out to colleagues.
- Use unit meetings as an opportunity to do a staffing of a challenging case to obtain different perspective.
- Reach out to friends and loved ones for help and support. And when they're having a bad day, make sure that you do your best to help them in return.

What stood out for you during
today's conversations?





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www.mechildrenstrust.org



Maine Children's Trust envisions a world where all children thrive, and all people are treated with dignity and respect. We recognize that communities of color face disproportionate effects of adversity. The Maine Children's Trust commits to looking inward and outward to do our part toward eliminating systemic racism and discrimination. We believe Mainers want the best for all children. We all have a role to play in ensuring equity and eliminating the disparities that impact our children's futures.



Supporting Local Family Strengthening Programs and Efforts

Prevention in practical terms means strengthening families so that families have the knowledge, resources and support they need to thrive. Parents need information about child development and parenting to understand typical behavior and manage their children's behavior in positive ways. With parenting information, they can support their children's social and emotional development so their children develop healthy relationships and are resilient. Parents need support for themselves too - this comes from having social connections with friends, other parents and the larger community. With support, parents can learn to manage their own stressors to navigate challenging times and rebound from difficulties.

PREVENTION COUNCILS – CENTRAL COORDINATION

Prevention Councils are fulfilling their statutory role, M.R.S.A. Title 22, Ch. 1057, as the county-level coordinating entity and lead in the delivery of child abuse prevention strategies and services.

The Prevention Council statute guides the Trust to support the Prevention Council efforts by:

- Providing coordinated leadership and central, statewide support to strengthen and expand of the network of Prevention Councils.
- Supporting ongoing delivery of child abuse and neglect prevention programming throughout Maine.



PREVENTION COUNCIL SERVICES



PREVENTION COUNCILS – Evidence-based Services



The Prevention Councils also serve special populations identified through prevention planning and offer programs for:

- Fathers
- Substance-affected families
- Co-parenting/separated families
- Prenatal families
- Education in child sexual abuse prevention.

In addition, the Prevention Councils provide training to family-serving professionals in each county in the following:

- Infant Safe Sleep
- Protective Factors
- Mandated Reporting
- Period of PURPLE Crying, an abusive head trauma prevention training.

Thank you to our **2022 Partners in Prevention** who joined as a unified voice for Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.
Our message is clear - **Supportive Communities & Strong Families Prevent Child Abuse & Neglect.**
We all have a role to play. Find out how everyone can get involved [here](#).



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<http://www.mechildrenstrust.org>

Local Resources

Click on any county for information about local activities and the contact information for the Prevention Council where you live.

Or select one of the filters below to see what's happening around the state.

Parenting Education

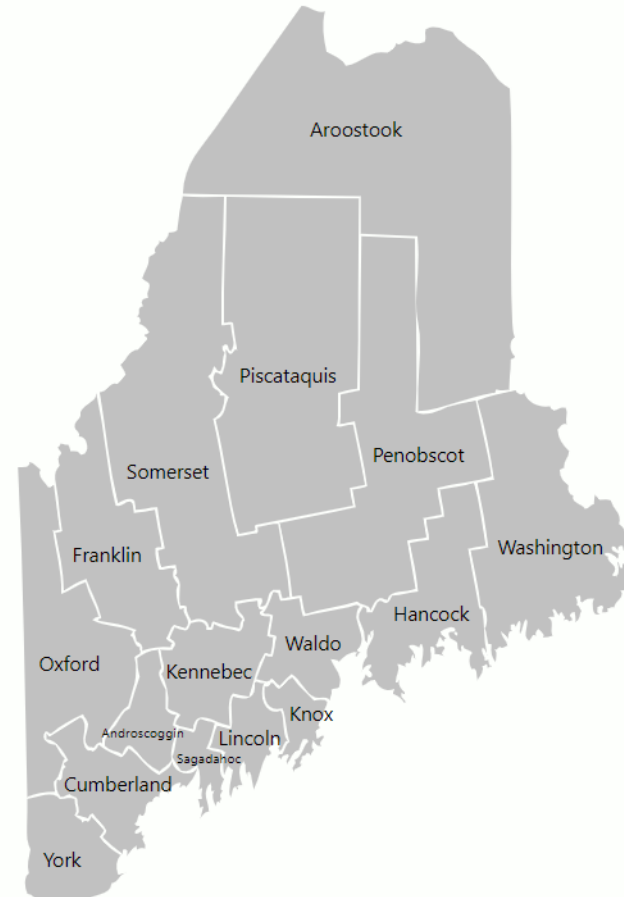
Find a class developed with your child's age in mind:

[Prenatal-5 Years](#)[5-12 Years](#)[13-18 Years](#)

Find a class geared toward:

[Fathers](#)[Co-Parenting/Blended Families](#)[Families Impacted by Substance Use Disorder](#)[Families with Children with Special Needs or Health Challenges](#)

Additional Activities

[Playgroups & Parenting Groups](#)[Events](#)[Professional Training](#)[Front Porch Project](#)

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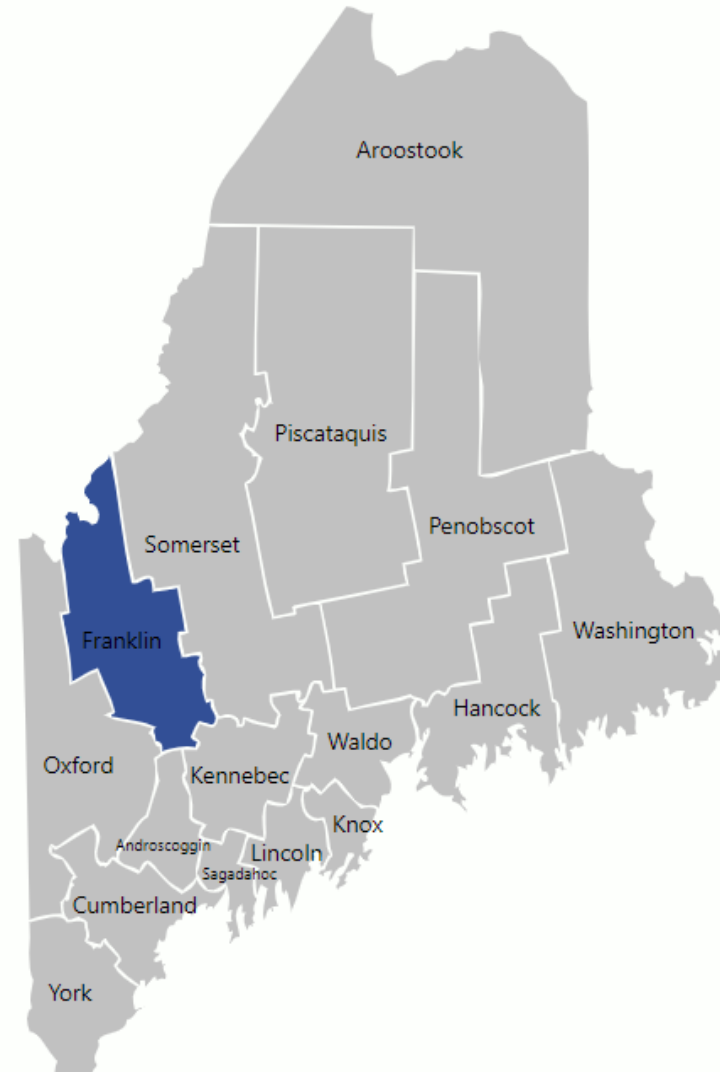
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Search Results

Dates and times subject to change. Contact your local Council to confirm the event details.

Active Parenting- Teens (ages 12+)

Council: Franklin County Children's Task Force

Start Date: 3/1/2022 End Date: 4/19/2022

Day(s) of the Week:

Time: Join us, Tuesdays, Beginning March 1st at 6:00pm

Town: Farmington

Audience: Parents and Caregivers 11-16

In Person or Virtual: Zoom

Registration Required: Yes

Link to Register: <http://www.fcctf.org>

Contact: Renee Whitley Phone: 207-778-6960

Website: <http://www.fcctf.org>

Active Parenting- Co-Parenting and Divorce

Council: Franklin County Children's Task Force

Start Date: 3/2/2022 End Date: 4/20/2022

Day(s) of the Week:

Time: Wednesdays, Beginning March 2, 6:00pm

Town: Farmington

Audience: Parents and Caregivers of Children 0-16

In Person or Virtual: Zoom

Registration Required: Yes

Link to Register: <http://www.fcctf.org>

Contact: Renee Whitley Phone: 207-778-6960

Website: <http://www.fcctf.org>



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