

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES™ PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK: Introduction COURSE OVERVIEW

The Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework is a national and international initiative that aims to develop and enhance five specific characteristics (called protective factors) that help keep families strong and children safe from abuse and neglect.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) developed the framework with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The initial goal was to create a national, systematic approach to prevention that would reach large numbers of children long before abuse or neglect occurred. The framework helps professionals who work with children and families in promoting the optimal development of all children while protecting vulnerable children from maltreatment.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, you should be able to:

- ✘ List five protective factors that help keep families strong and prevent child abuse and neglect.
- ✘ Identify multiple strategies and concrete everyday actions that help families build those protective factors.
- ✘ Understand what it means to work with families in a strength-based way.
- ✘ Become familiar with the Strengthening Families™ Self-Assessment and explore ways that it can be used.

The Protective Factors Framework in Different Fields

This training is designed to be used by anyone who works with children and families – in any field. No matter where your work with children and families falls within the spectrum of various systems, it is important to view the building of protective factors in a holistic manner. Understanding concrete ways you can support the building of protective factors in your own field may be illuminated by the challenges experienced in other fields as well.



Defining the Five Protective Factors

Families are supported to build:

Parental Resilience

The ability to recover from difficult life experiences, and often to be strengthened by and even transformed by those experiences.

Social Connections

Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development.

Concrete Support in Times of Need

Access to concrete support and services that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.

NOTES



Discussion on Strength-Based Theory

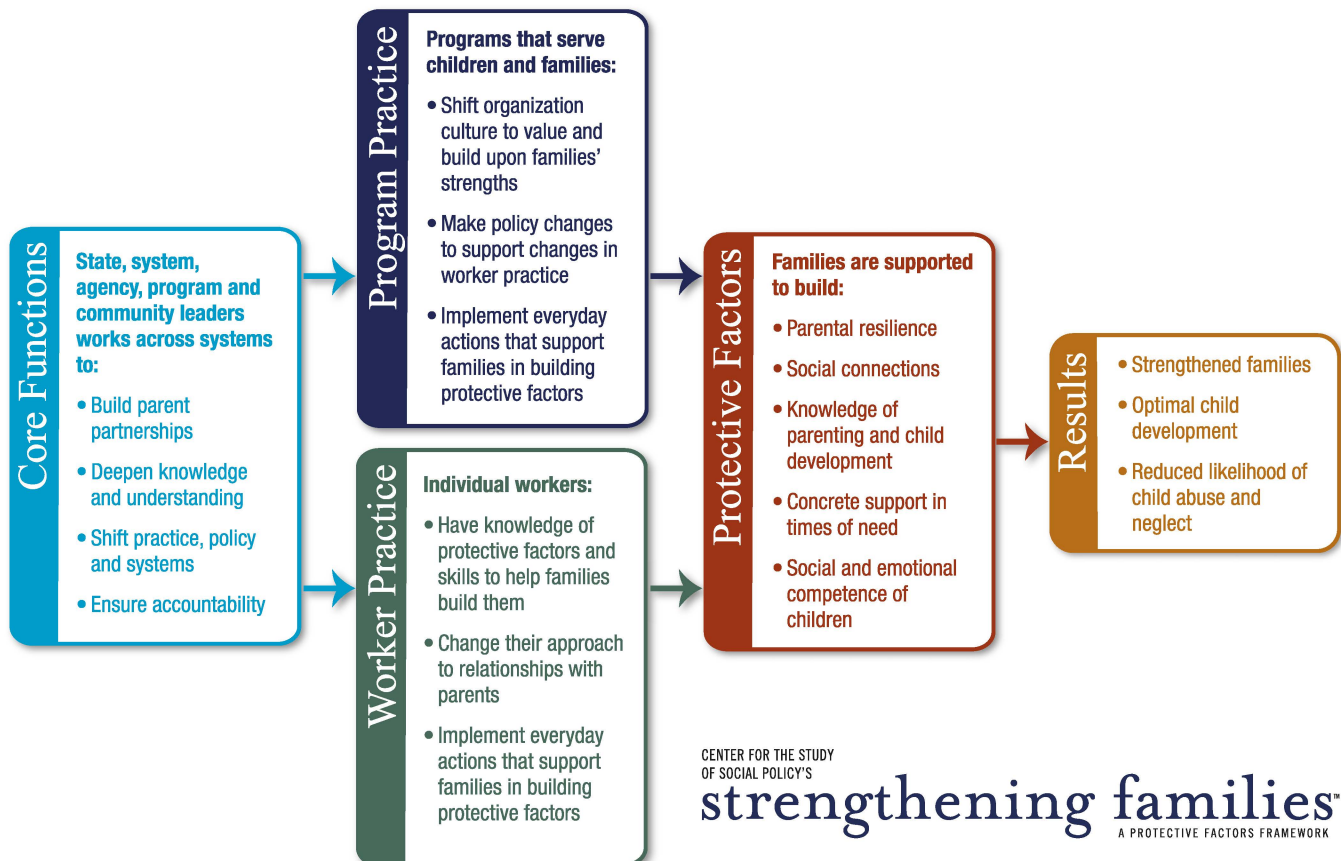
This training is about looking at families through a different lens. This new way of thinking focuses on what's strong, not what's wrong! This is a new and refreshing concept – don't wait until families have serious problems; provide support and seek to empower families before crises occur.

Introducing the Pathway to Improved Outcomes for Children and Families

A protective factor is a characteristic that makes a parent, child or family more likely to thrive and less likely to experience a negative outcome. A protective factor is like the flip side of a risk factor. Think of protective factors as what help children and families thrive despite whatever risk factors they might face.

The five Strengthening Families protective factors were chosen on the basis of extensive research about children and families. They are not the only protective factors that keep families strong. They were selected because they can be built

The Pathway to Improved Outcomes for Children and Families
Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework Logic Model

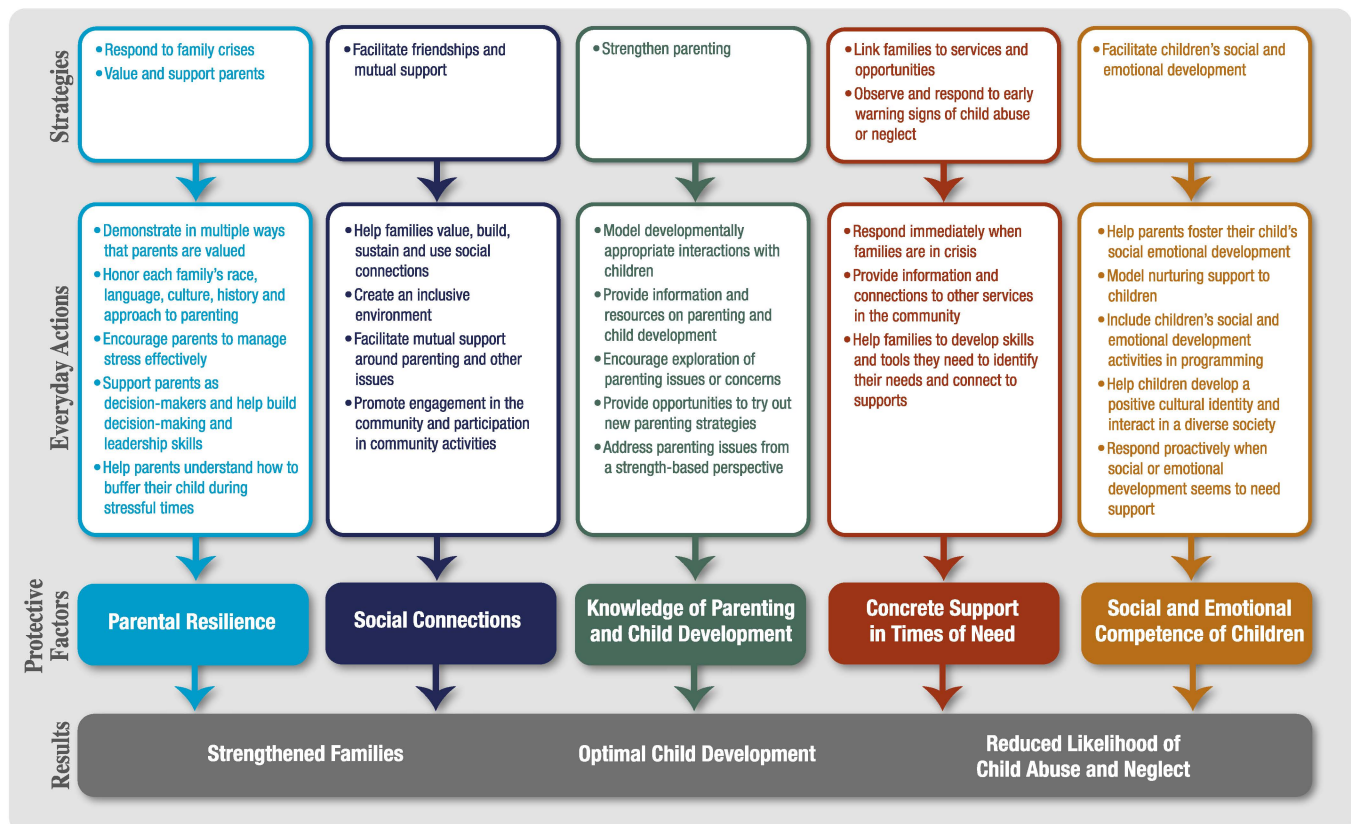


through interaction with the people and systems that families encounter in their day-to-day lives. In Strengthening Families, **all families** are included, because all families need some support in building the following protective factors:

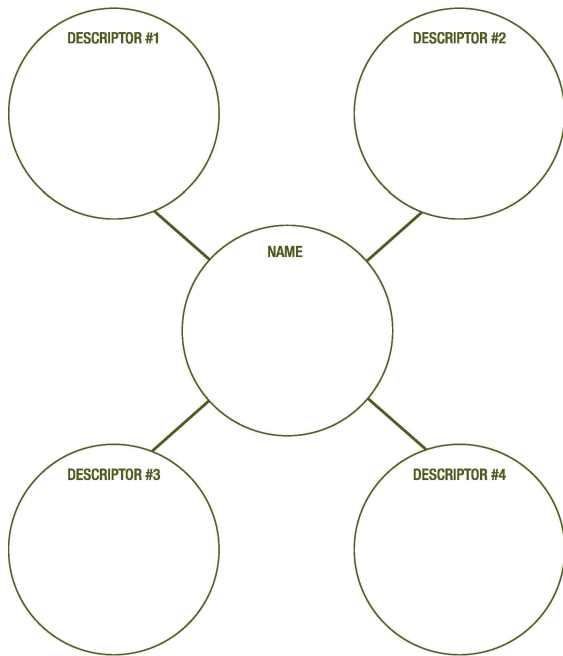
- 1 **Parental resilience** – The ability to recover from difficult life experiences, and often to be strengthened by and even transformed by those experiences.
- 2 **Social connections** – Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support.
- 3 **Knowledge of parenting and child development** – Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development.
- 4 **Concrete support in times of need** – Access to concrete support and services that address a family’s needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.
- 5 **Social and emotional competence of children** – Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.

NOTES

**The Pathway to Improved Outcomes for Children and Families
Strategies and Everyday Actions That Help Build Protective Factors**



Circles of My Multicultural Self



Strategies and Everyday Actions That Help Build Protective Factors

How do we build these protective factors into our work and support the families we work with every day to intentionally build them? It is likely that you are already implementing many of these strategies and everyday actions in your current work. Perhaps you simply need to be more intentional as you plan and prioritize your time and other resources.

Introduction to the Strengthening Families™ Self-Assessment

The Strengthening Families™ Self-Assessment gives early care and education centers, child welfare agencies and other formal programs that serve children and families a structured way to look at what their programs are doing to strengthen families. It is also a way to gather the data this is necessary to drive systems change. There are multiple versions of the self-assessment. The Center for the Study of Social Policy updates these tools from time to time and you can check www.strengtheningfamilies.net to access the latest versions that are available. Spanish translations of key materials are also available.

Culture and Family Strengths

Working across cultures can sometimes make it difficult to appreciate another family's strengths. We are often not even aware of the way culture influences our beliefs about children and their care. It is important to come face to face with our own perspectives about families. Consider the idea of looking at a family's strengths from the child's point of view. When you do this, does your perspective change?



The National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds:

- ✂ Ensures all states have a strong and effective children's trust or prevention fund capable of leading and investing in strategies, policies and best practices that prevent child abuse and neglect before it occurs.
- ✂ Initiates and engages in national efforts that help state children's trust and prevention funds in strengthening families to prevent child abuse and neglect.
- ✂ Promotes and supports a system of services, laws, practices and attitudes that supports families by enabling them to provide their children with safe, healthy and nurturing childhoods.



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES™ PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK Using the Protective Factors in Different Fields

If You Work in Child Welfare



The Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework is being embraced by child protective services (CPS) agencies around the United States as a new way to approach the families of the children they work to protect.

Some jurisdictions have adopted the Protective Factors Framework directly in their work; others have strengthened their partnerships with early care and education programs to support prevention and to ensure the highest possible care is provided to children who are involved in CPS. In other jurisdictions, individual CPS workers have simply made small but significant changes to the way they interact with families.

If You Work in Early Care and Education



Early care and education providers have adopted the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework in large numbers, all across the United States. Strengthening Families empowers providers to play a role in the prevention of child abuse and neglect – not just as a mandated reporter when a child has already been hurt.

As a child care provider, you have unique relationships with parents – as a trusted expert on child development, an adult who truly cares for their children, and perhaps one of the first people to notice when a family is struggling.

We hope you will find inspiration and motivation in this training, to help you change your work in small but significant ways that will make a difference for families. Whether you work in a center or provide care for children in your home, you will find ideas.

If You Work in Another Child- and Family-Serving Field



The Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework is applicable in a broad range of settings, from Birth to Three to family resource centers, from crisis nurseries to medical clinics, from domestic violence programs to Play &

Learn groups. By making small but significant changes in how you approach the families you work with, you can help to keep families strong and children safe in your community.

While we could not tailor this training to address how to use the protective factors in every possible setting, we believe that you will be able to see how it applies in your work. When you encounter a choice between alternative content branches in this training, select the option that best fits with your work or the one that you find the most interesting.

If You Are a Parent



Parent leadership and partnerships have been key to making Strengthening Families into a national movement. We are so pleased that parents are participating in this training.

Throughout the training, we refer to “your work” with children and families. Please interpret this loosely. Your work might be as a parent leader within your early care and education program, as an advocate for your child in the educational system, as a parent representative on a committee at any level, or as a friendly neighbor helping other families in your community. As a formal volunteer, a friend, a family member, or a parent representative, you have a role to play in helping families stay strong.

In this training, when you encounter a choice between alternative content branches, select the option that best fits with the work you do, or the one that you find the most interesting.

Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework: Introduction

Tools and Resources

TO SUPPORT STRENGTHENING FAMILIES IMPLEMENTATION

The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) maintains a rich library of resources to support implementation of the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework.

The website, www.StrengtheningFamilies.net, has four main sections:

- 1 ABOUT** includes everything you need to know about the Protective Factors Framework and how it is being implemented. Here you'll find shareable documents and PowerPoint slides you can use to explain the Protective Factors Framework, the research behind Strengthening Families, the core functions of Strengthening Families implementation and how it is being implemented around the country. This section also includes profiles of state Strengthening Families initiatives and information about how national partner organizations are using the framework.
- 2 PRACTICE** includes tools to support aligning practice with the Protective Factors Framework, including the program self-assessment tools that provide inspiration for small but significant changes in how programs work with families. Also included here are "Making the Link" factsheets that explain how Strengthening Families can be used in conjunction with a number of evidence-based programs and practice models; information about building parent partnerships; links to resources for additional training about the Protective Factors Framework; and tools for ensuring accountability.
- 3 SYSTEMS** includes a wealth of resources related to implementation in each of four key systems: early care and education, child abuse and neglect prevention, child welfare and home visiting. This section also includes tools and guidance for cross-systems leadership teams and materials you can use for reaching out to new partners in primary care, education and business.
- 4 POLICY** includes information about CSSP's policy agenda and many issue briefs related to specific federal funding and policy initiatives over the years.

www.StrengtheningFamilies.net contains a wide range of implementation tools for those implementing at all levels.

Strengthening Families Self-Assessments based on exemplary practices activities identified through field research. Child and family-serving programs can use it to assess how well current activities, services and program policies support families to build protective factors.

<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/practice>

The Strengthening Families Evaluation Portal includes the self-assessment and parent and staff surveys to support action planning at the program level. Provided by national Strengthening Families partner Mosaic Network, the online system can also provide aggregated data from multiple programs to inform resource and support decisions at the local or state level.

<http://www.strengtheningfamiliesevaluationportal.com>

Parents' Assessment of Protective Factors is a strengths-based measure that assesses the presence, strength and growth of parents' self-reported beliefs, feelings and behaviors that are regarded as indicators of the Strengthening Families protective factors. The tool and a user guide are available in both English and Spanish.

<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/practice/ensuring-accountability>

The Protective Factors Survey was created by the FRIENDS National Resource Center. This reliability and validity tested, 20-item caregiver-completed tool helps measure changes in family protective factors. The PFS provides feedback to agencies for continuous improvement and evaluation purposes and is not intended for individual assessment, placement, or diagnostic purposes. A Spanish version of the tool is also available.

<http://friendsnrc.org/protective-factors-survey>

Parent and Community Cafés use intimate, guided conversations as a tool and process to support parents in understanding and building their own protective factors. Both the parent and community café models are based on the World Café approach and are implemented in partnership with parent leaders.

<http://www.bestrongfamilies.net/build-protective-factors/parent-cafes>

<http://thecommunitycafe.com>

Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework: Introduction

 **Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life in Your Work – A Resource for Action** 

Finding Your ACE Score

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

-
- 1 Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often**...
Swear at you, insult you, put you down or humiliate you?
or
Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
-
- 2 Did a parent or other adult in the household **often or very often**...
Push, grab, slap or throw something at you?
or
Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
-
- 3 Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you **ever**...
Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?
or
Attempt or actually have oral, anal or vaginal intercourse with you? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
-
- 4 Did you **often or very often** feel that...
No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?
or
Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other or support each other? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
-
- 5 Did you **often or very often** feel that...
You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes and had no one to protect you?
or
Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
-
- 6 Were your parents **ever** separated or divorced? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
-
- 7 Was your mother or stepmother:
Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped or had something thrown at her?
or
Sometimes, often or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist or hit with something hard?
or
Ever repeatedly hit at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
-
- 8 Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
-
- 9 Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____
-
- 10 Did a household member go to prison? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

Now add up your "Yes" answers: _____
This is your ACE Score.

To learn more about the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study visit:
<http://www.acestudy.org/home> or <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy>

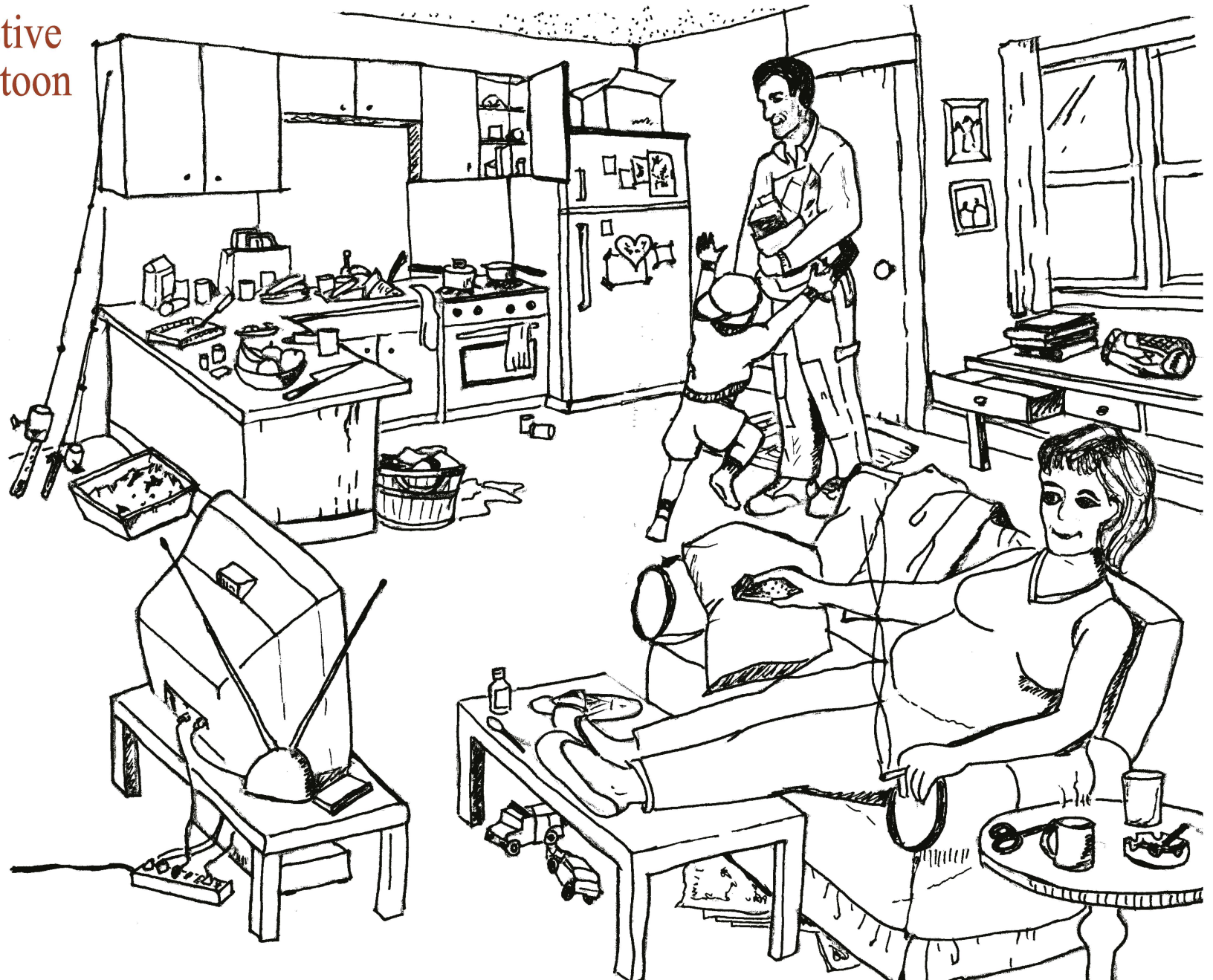
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Risk/Protective Factors Cartoon



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The Pathway to Improved Outcomes for Children and Families

Defining the Five Protective Factors

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Social and Emotional Competence of Children

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strengthening families[™]
A PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

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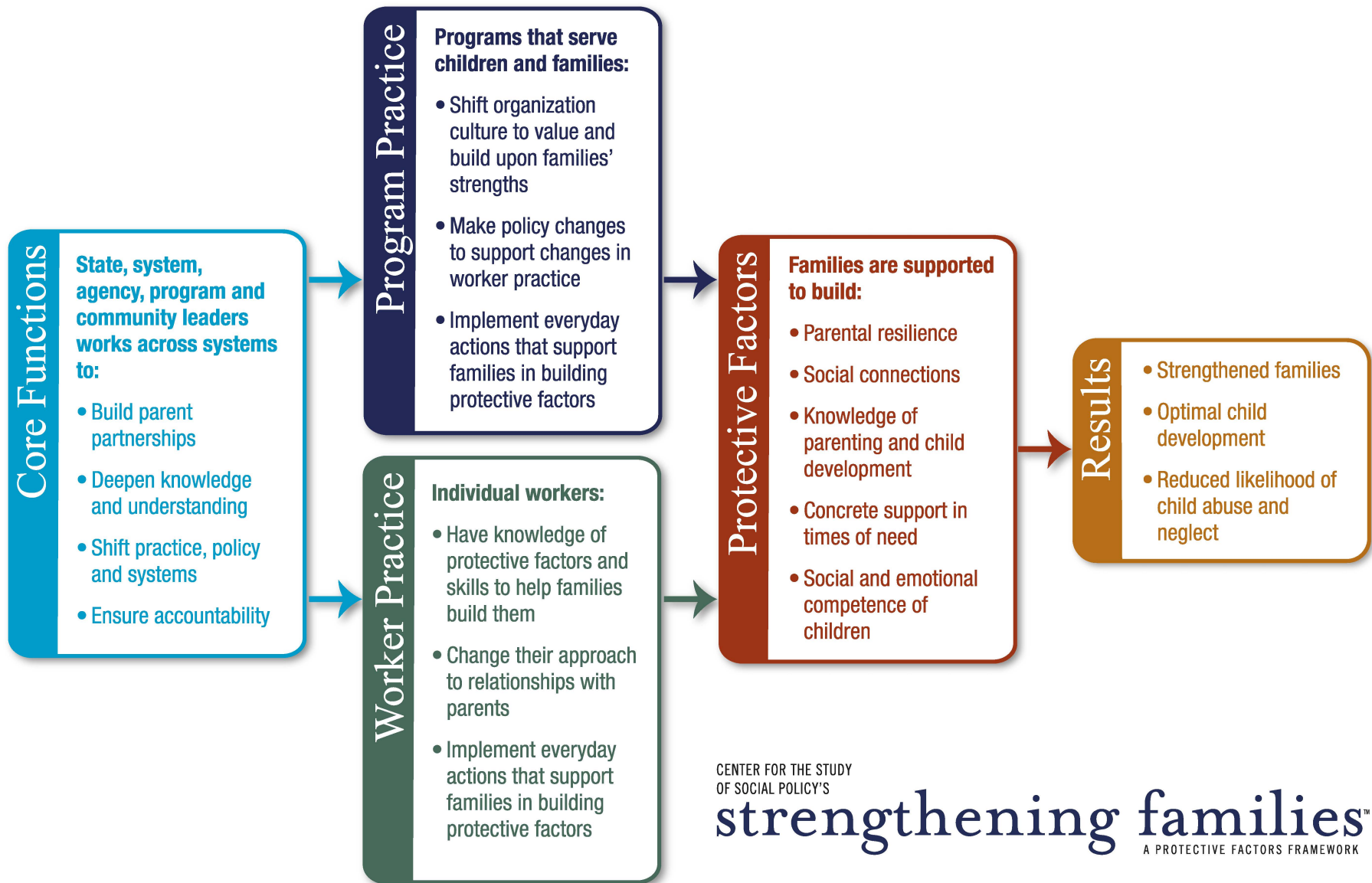
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Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework Logic Model



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You Are Becoming Part of a National and International Movement

Once the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework was developed, early childhood and child welfare leaders began working to implement it. Cross-sector State Leadership Teams now coordinate Strengthening Families initiatives in more than 30 states.



Children's Trust Funds across the country have been key conveners and implementers of Strengthening Families, supported by the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds. States have taken various approaches to implementing the framework.

A number of national partners are also implementing Strengthening Families in their own work, in partnership with the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). In addition to the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds, national partner organizations include United Way Worldwide, ZERO TO THREE, the Child Welfare Information Gateway, FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, and Parents as Teachers.

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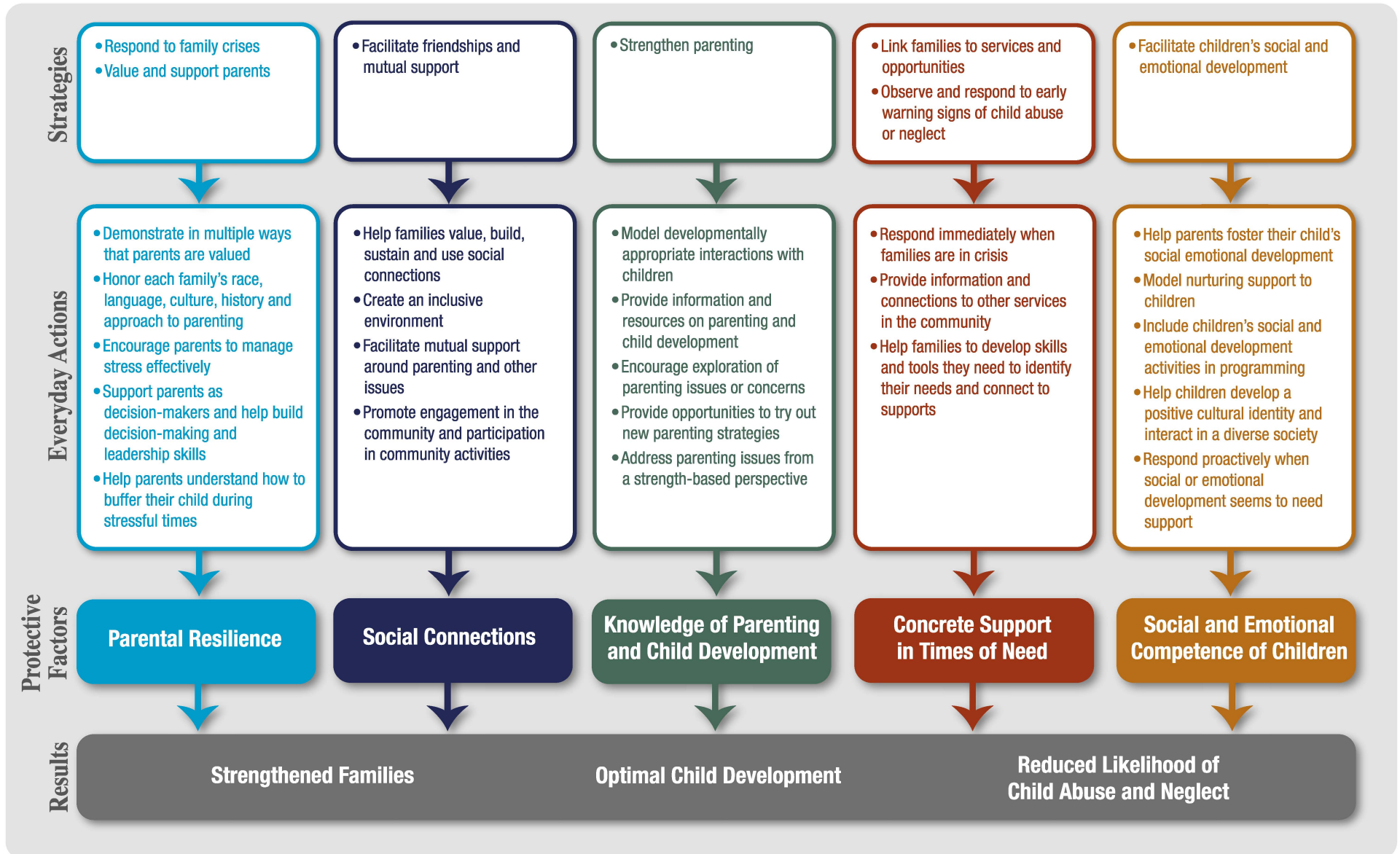
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The Pathway to Improved Outcomes for Children and Families

Strategies and Everyday Actions That Help Build Protective Factors



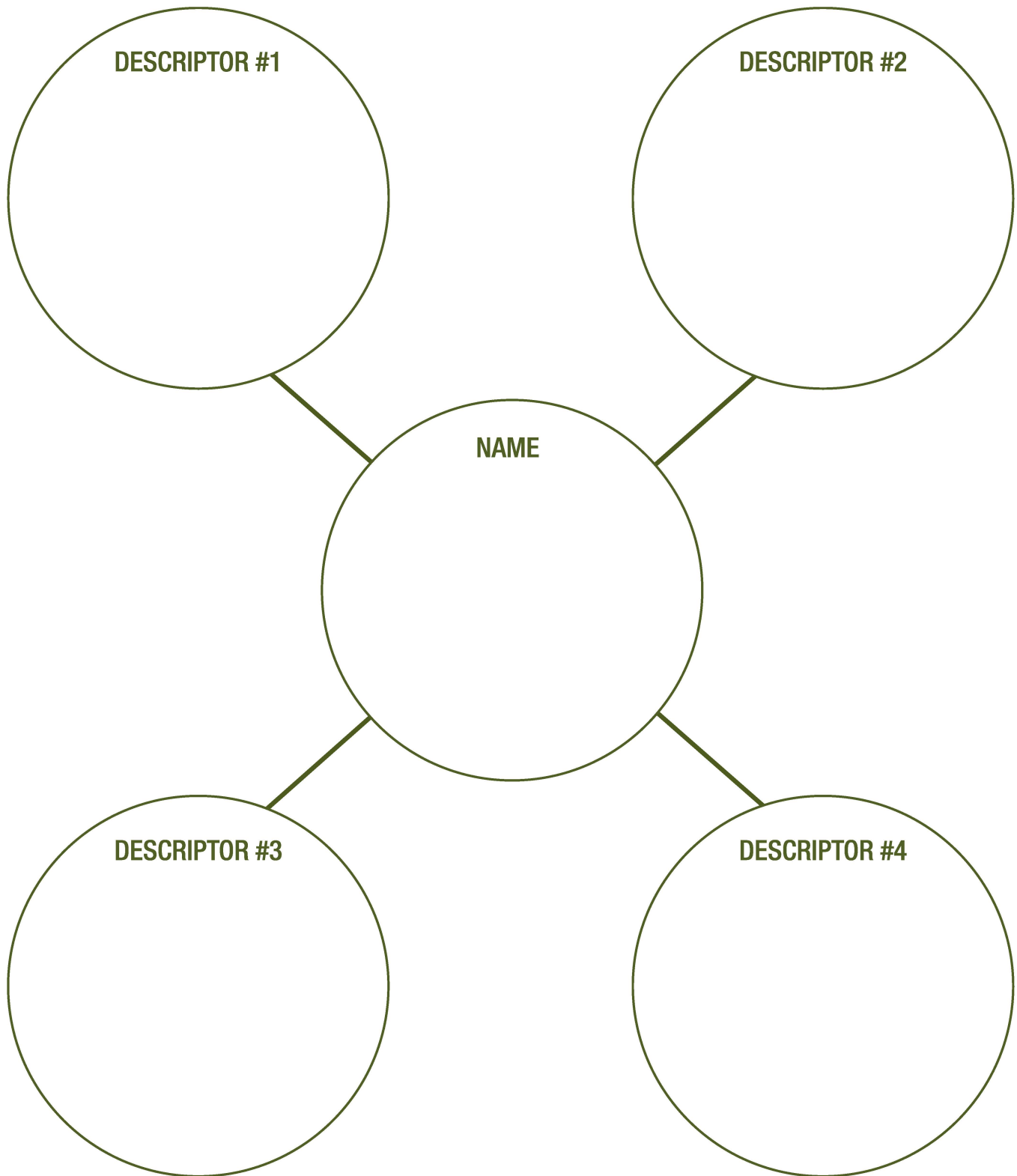
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Circles of My Multicultural Self



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Why Is It Important to Build Partnerships with Families?

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Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life in Your Work

Why Is It Important to Build Partnerships with Families?




- The family is the center of a child's life; working with parents gives us a more holistic view of how to support and strengthen that family.
- Highly involved families almost double the positive odds for their children in education, health promotion and social-emotional development.

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Why Do Parents Get Involved?


- They believe the issue is important to them and their family.
- They believe they have something to contribute.
- They believe they will be listened to and their contributions respected.
- They believe that their participation will make a difference.



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How Do Parents Stay Involved?




- Multiple opportunities for participation, from a small contribution of time to progressively larger contributions of time and effort.
- Families receive sufficient advanced notice.
- Their participation is facilitated by: child care, transportation, dinner, some form of compensation, educational benefits.

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How Do Parents Stay Involved?



- Families are listened to: their ideas are supported and respected.
- They do not experience retribution as a result of their participation.
- Family participation has an impact.
- Their participation is consciously and visibly appreciated.

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Getting Started – Engaging Parents



- Ask parents what they want and need from your program.
- Frame it in terms of the protective factors:
 - What's hard about parenting?
 - How can we be a more welcoming place for parents, where families feel comfortable asking for help or advice?
 - How can we reach out to and support families when they are overwhelmed, stressed or isolated?
 - How can we make it easier for parents to connect to each other?

5
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