

strengthening families

G E O R G I A

STRONG FAMILIES

Tips & Resources for Parents with Happy, Healthy and Smart Kids



Stopping Child Abuse & Neglect Starts with Strong Families

Across the country, early care and education programs, child welfare departments, and others are using the Strengthening Families approach to build five Protective Factors in families:

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| 1 | PARENTAL RESILIENCE | ➔ | PARENTS CAN BOUNCE BACK |
| 2 | SOCIAL CONNECTIONS | ➔ | PARENTS HAVE FRIENDS |
| 3 | KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING & OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT | ➔ | PARENTS KNOW HOW CHILDREN AND YOUTH GROW AND LEARN |
| 4 | CONCRETE SUPPORT IN TIME OF NEED | ➔ | PARENTS KNOW WHERE TO TURN FOR HELP |
| 5 | SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN | ➔ | CHILDREN LEARN TO TALK ABOUT AND HANDLE THEIR FEELINGS |



Research shows that these factors reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect by providing parents with what they need to parent effectively, even under stress. By building relationships with families, programs can recognize signs of stress and build families' Protective Factors with timely, effective help. This breakthrough strategy for dealing with child neglect and abuse shows great promise because:

- ➔ The Protective Factors have been demonstrated to work and are informed by extensive, rigorous research.
- ➔ Activities that build the Protective Factors can be built into programs that already exist in every state, such as early childhood education and child welfare, at little cost.
- ➔ Strengthening Families has widespread support from social science researchers, state child welfare officials, early childhood practitioners, and policy experts. Currently, the Strengthening Families approach is being applied in 36 states.
- ➔ Early childhood educators want to strengthen families: a National Association for the Education of Young Children survey shows that 97% want to do more to prevent maltreatment.

Although Strengthening Families was developed in early care and education programs, partners in a large variety of settings working with many different populations are exploring ways to apply the approach.

Becoming the “Place”

EVERYBODY

Knows Your Name

By Diane Bellem, Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers

The national Strengthening Families initiative and movement is about building protective factors and the means to the end is to create a warm welcoming environment for families and staff. A place that says, “you are welcome here”. A “place” that creates a sense of community and belonging. That special “place” can be any place where people gather together to work, play, worship, live or share...and it especially should be the place where families find services for their children.

The center or program becomes a community “place”, a place where parents and staff learn from one another and parent’s adult needs are met through program activities and through linkages to the community. The center or program is a “gateway” to the community. So what does that mean? It means that we commit to establishing positive relationships with one another. Everybody knows your name!! It means sharing ideas, feelings, and resources.

A great idea is to read a children’s book at parent meetings and use the book theme to launch a conversation about how we can learn from one another. A suggestion for good books about engaging men are: In Daddy's Arms I Am Tall: African Americans Celebrating Fathers (School & Library Binding) and Teach Me Daddy (Children's Publishing :: Storybooks). Regardless of the age of the children in your program, these books can start the conversation! What will you do this spring to create a warm, welcoming environment and to create a “place” that says, “you are welcome here”?



www.text4baby.org

a service that sends free text messages to women who are pregnant or whose babies are less than a year old, providing them with information, and reminders, to improve their health and the health of their babies

Strengthening Families Georgia

Raising Your Grandchildren

Parenting the second time around brings special challenges and special joys. Do not hesitate to ask for help or seek services in your community for yourself and your grandchildren.

What's Happening

No matter why or how they came to live with you, your grandchildren will benefit from being in your home. When children cannot be with their parents, living with a grandparent may provide:

- Fewer moves from place to place
- The comfort of a familiar language and culture
- A chance to stay with siblings
- More contact

What You Might Be Seeing

Despite these benefits, the children will face some unique challenges:

- They may feel insecure and unsure that you will take care of them.
- They may act out or challenge you.
- They will miss their parents.
- They may be anxious or depressed.
- They may seem young or act too old for their ages.

What You Can Do

It will take time for your grandchildren to feel safe and secure in their new home with you. You can encourage these good feelings in a number of ways:

- Set up a daily routine of mealtimes, bedtime, and other activities.
- Help your grandchildren feel “at home” by creating a space just for them.
- Talk to your grandchildren, and listen when they talk to you.
- Set up a few rules and explain your expectations. Then, enforce the rules consistently.
- Reward positive behavior. When children make mistakes, focus on teaching rather than punishing.
- Be as involved with their school as you can, and encourage your children to participate in school activities.

This is a big job, and you may need help from your community. Here are some suggestions:

- Help with housing or other bills, clothing, or school supplies may be available specifically for grandparents raising grandchildren in your community.
- Join a support group. Often there are local groups for grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Ask for help and referrals from a church leader, the counselor at your child's school, or a social services agency.
- If necessary, get professional help to address your grandchild's special needs, such as medical care, mental health care, or special education.



Who are we?

Strengthening Families Georgia (SFG) represents a partnership of national, state and local, and public and private organizations dedicated to embedding five research-based protective factors in services and supports for children and their families. This project was supported in part by the Governor's Office for Children and Families through Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant Program (CBCAP). Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Governor's Office for Children and Families or the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant Program (CBCAP). The total dollar amount for this project is \$35,000 and 100% of the cost is Federal funds.

For more information & resources, go to
www.strengtheningfamilies.net

Your Voice Counts with Elected Officials

Who knows better than Mom or Dad what a child needs?

By Pat Willis, Voices for Georgia's Children

When your elected officials make decisions about state services or policies affecting children, they often want information about the subject from experts. They are so busy going to meetings and reading bills that they don't always have time to reach out to the experts to ask.

Georgia Senators and Representatives tell us that your emails and phone calls make a difference in how they look at an issue, what questions they ask and how they vote. Often they will receive information for the entire state about the numbers of children affected, where they live, their health, education or behavior problems. But they are still anxious to know the real impact their decisions will have on the children in their own communities.

Mom and Dad, consider yourself an expert! Call or email your elected official when you have an opinion about children's issues that are in the news or being considered by the governor or the statehouse. Whether the issue relates to quality of child care, juvenile laws, school testing, PreK, adoptions, or other children's interest, it is important for you to share your story and share your opinion.

If you don't know how to get in touch with the man or woman who represents you, you can call 1-800-GA-VOTES or go online to Georgia's "My Voter Page" at <http://www.sos.georgia.gov/MVP>. You also may visit www.georgiavoices.org and click on "Legislator Finder." Your voice counts!

