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# Engaging Families Using the Kentucky Strengthening Families Protective Factors: Focus On Healthy Behaviors

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Module Handout

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## Engaging Families using the Kentucky Strengthening Families Protective Factors: Focus on Healthy Behaviors

This module will examine the Kentucky Strengthening Families Protective Factors and simple strategies ECE professionals can use to support families and child health.

### Objectives:

- Identify 2 actions to enhance the family-friendly environment in their classroom or program
- Review everyday actions that support families in building protective factors
- Practice incorporating the Kentucky Strengthening Families Protective Factors into typical family events

### Resources:



**Kentucky Strengthening Families (KYSF)** represents a multi-disciplinary partnership of over 20 national, state and local, and public and private organizations dedicated to embedding six research-based Protective Factors into services and supports for children and their families. Supporting families is a key strategy for promoting school readiness and preventing child abuse and neglect. All families experience times of stress, and research demonstrates that children grow and learn best in families who have the supports and skills to deal with those times. Kentucky Strengthening Families is using a nationally recognized strategy—Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework – which is coordinated by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. Access a 3-hour online module on Kentucky Strengthening Families, by visiting <http://kidsnow.ky.gov/Improving-Early-Care/Pages/-Kentucky-Strengthening-Families.aspx>.

**5-2-1-0 Healthy Numbers for Kentucky Families** information can be found by visiting: <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/mch/hp/5210/>. Access a 2-hour online module on 5-2-1-0 by visiting <https://learn.hdi.uky.edu/>.

## Part A: Family Engagement Practices

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- Integrate culture and community - incorporate role models of all cultural, ethnic and economic backgrounds
- Provide a welcoming environment - post welcoming signage and have staff greet families near the entrance
- Strive for program-family partnerships - include families in decisions related to both their child's education and the program as a whole
- Make a commitment to outreach - model educational activities families can do to support learning
- Provide family resources and referrals - provide resources and/or referrals to families in preventative health and family services
- Set and reinforce program standards - set clear program standards and ongoing professional development opportunities

### Reflective Activity – Creating a Family Friendly Environment

Use this assessment tool to learn whether program staff is employing best practices to welcome families in your program.

**Complete the grid on the following pages. After completing the grid, circle the two practices you feel your program is strongest at supporting and highlight or underline the two practices you would like to work on.**

Best Practices for Creating a Welcoming Climate for Families	How do you put this into practice?
Photographs of the families of children and program staff are displayed regularly in the facility.	
Adult family members have a comfortable place to sit and be involved with their child and others.	
Magazines and other kinds of parenting information are available to families.	
A welcome sign, in languages spoken by all the families, greets families and visitors.	
The spaces for adults and children are orderly, comfortable, attractive, and interesting.	

(continued)

Program staff greet the adults as well as the children.	
A sense of joy and caring is nurtured in the program and exists among the people in the program.	
The program celebrates small and big accomplishments of adults and children.	
Healthy refreshments (milk, coffee, water) are offered to family members who are visiting, volunteering or filling out forms.	
Adults have safe places to store their coats and personal belongings when they participate at the program.	
Family members (including extended family members) are invited to participate in the program.	
Healthy refreshments and dinner (when appropriate) are provided at events that families attend.	
Younger and older siblings are welcome to come with parents when they are involved in program activities.	
Parents are invited to visit the program at any time that is convenient for them.	
Staff are understanding and help with separation issues as parents develop routines for leaving their child in care.	
The program regularly schedules informal times for families to get to know one another.	
The operating hours of the program reflect the needs of families served.	
Staffing schedules and routines support conversations between care givers and family members.	
Staff introduce themselves and nurture their relationships with families.	
Parent contributions of books and materials that reflect all families are solicited and welcomed.	
Staff reach out to parents who are isolated or have low self-esteem and connect them with other families.	
Other:	

*Adapted with permission from Participants' Manual: Stronger Together. Family Support and Early Childhood Education (San Rafael, California: Parent Services Project, Inc.), 2006.*

## Part B: Kentucky Strengthening Families

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Kentucky Strengthening Families is a framework, not a program, for how organizations work with families from a strength-based family-driven approach.

### Five Core Concepts of Kentucky Strengthening Families

1. All families have strengths and skills that are protective factors
2. All families face adversity at times and strong relationships help buffer this (toxic) stress
3. Families know their children best and all families should be respected
4. Early experiences are important because they impact both the child and family in positive and negative ways for a lifetime
5. Kentucky Strengthening Families promotes these concepts through small but significant changes in everyday actions

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 other side of a risk factor. You can also think of protective factors as what helps children and families thrive despite whatever risk factors they might face.

### Kentucky Strengthening Families Six Protective Factors

1. Parental Resilience-Families bounce back
2. Social Connections-Families have friends they can count on
3. Knowledge of Child Development-Families learn how their children grow and develop
4. Concrete Support in Times of Need-Families get assistance to meet basic needs
5. Social & Emotional Competence of Children-Families teach children how to have healthy relationships
6. Nurturing and Attachment- Families ensure children feel loved & safe



## **Reflective Activity**

Think about the family in which you grew up.

**Which one of the six protective factors was the greatest source of strength for your family?**

**Which one was more of a challenge for your family?**

**How has that affected the way you live as an adult?**

Now consider your family today.

**Which one of the six protective factors is the greatest source of strength for your family?**

**Which one is more of a challenge for your family?**

## Part C: Everyday Actions to Support the Protective Factors & Healthy Behaviors

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### Parental Resilience

#### Everyday Actions:

- Honor each family's race, language, culture, history and approach to parenting
- Encourage parents to manage stress
- Support parents as decision-makers and help build decision-making and leadership skills
- Create welcoming and supportive environments and build relationships with families
- Involve parents in decisions about their children and program
- Help parents understand how to buffer their child during stressful times



#### Healthy Behaviors:

- ✓ Ask parents to review your programs menus. *Do the items you serve reflect the variety of cultures of families in your program? Are there foods that families would like to see added?*
- ✓ Infant feeding plans offer an opportunity for parents to involve parents in decisions about their child. Working with parents on when foods will be introduced and how sharing information on how the child responds to each food reinforces parental authority as decision makers.

### Social Connections

#### Everyday Actions:

- Demonstrate in multiple ways that parents are valued
- Help families value, build, sustain and use social connections
- Facilitate mutual support
- Promote engagement in the community and participation in community activities
- Arrange family field trips and activities



#### Healthy Behaviors:

- ✓ Offer times/events for parents of similar aged children to gather and discuss typical parenting challenges such supporting picky eaters, encouraging kids to eat vegetables or ideas on limiting TV/screen time.

- ✓ Encourage parents to set up playgroups visiting different parks on the weekend for active play. Share information about free and low cost community events for families with young children.

## Knowledge of Child Development

### Everyday Actions:

- 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
- Share observations with parents about the child's strengths and the parent's strengths
- Make parent information available in family's home language



### Healthy Behaviors:

- ✓ Provide information on developmental milestones and gross motor skills in through many formats including books, pamphlets, social media and bulletin boards.
- ✓ Encourage families to visit and observe children during the day, consider meal times, and active play times.
- ✓ Staff share new observations of children with families such as eating new foods or gaining new skills.

## Concrete Support in Times of Need

### Everyday Actions:

- Respond immediately when families are in crisis
- Provide information and connections to services in the community
- Help families develop skills and tools they need to identify their needs and connect to supports
- Build relationships with families, resulting in comfort in sharing their challenge



### Healthy Behaviors:

- ✓ Keep information on resources including help lines, food panties, free meals at local churches in a parent area and share contact information for local dentists, pediatricians, health departments, WIC and SNAP.
- ✓ Maintain a swap box with items parents bring that children have outgrown including coats and shoes for play.



## Reflective Activity

List some of the everyday practices and actions supporting healthy behaviors that your program or your classroom already does consistently.

Everyday Actions

Supporting Healthy Behaviors

What are the next steps for your program or your classroom?

## Part D: Resources

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### Repeater Eater and 5-A-Day Log

Tools to help families track how many vegetables a day their child is eating and to track exposures to new foods. The back side of the logs have useful information and tips on how to encourage healthy eating.

<http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/mch/hp/5210/>



### Two Bite Club from MyPlate.gov

This educational storybook, available in English and in Spanish, was developed to introduce MyPlate to young children. Parents or caregivers read the book to children and encourage them to try foods from each food group by eating just two bites, just like the characters in the story. The back of the book contains a MyPlate coloring page, a blank certificate for the Two Bite Club, fun activity pages for kids, and Tips for Growing Healthy Eaters

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/tools-resources/nutrition.htm>



### WHOA! SLOW! GO!

An easy way to learn about which foods are lower in fat and calories is to think in terms of GO, SLOW, and WHOA. GO foods are the lowest in fat, sugar and calories, and can be eaten almost anytime. SLOW foods are higher in fat, added sugar and calories and should be eaten sometimes or less often. WHOA foods should only be eaten occasionally.

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/eat-right/choosing-foods.htm>



### United States Department of Agriculture Tip Sheets

This site has over 60 useful one-page documents for a variety of subjects around nutrition and physical activity. Examples include healthy snacking, becoming an active family, eating healthy on a budget and Cut Back on Your Kid's Sweet Treats-10 tips to decrease added sugars.

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplate-tip-sheets>



### Screen Time Limits

Help parents become aware of the AAP guideline on screen time with their one-page information sheets.

<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/tv-habits.html>



### Physical Activity

The CDC has developed one-page sheets that provide information on developmental milestones that are free to download or to order. The site also has information on brochures and booklets.

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/>



### Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

Consider setting up a sugar display to help parents visualize how much sugar is in common beverages given to children.

<https://www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www2/filebox/service/healthy-living/growuphealthy/fivetwoone/createsugarkit.pdf>

## Part E: Summary

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### **Program Self-Assessments**

The Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment outlines how the protective factors can be supported through small but significant changes in program practice. A version has been developed for Center Based Care and Family Child Care Providers.

<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/practice#program-self-assesments>

### **Kentucky Strengthening Families framework: Parent Cafes**

A key element in the implementation of Kentucky Strengthening Families has been the use of café-style conversations among parents and caregivers. Cafés are a method of facilitating meaningful, reflective conversations that promote leadership and collaboration. These gatherings bring families and staff together for structured conversations that directly or indirectly address protective factors. Through participation in cafés, parents and caregivers build leadership and relationships as well as the protective factors that help to strengthen their families.

A 6-hour training is available on becoming a facilitator for Parent Cafes. For more information, contact Laura Beard at [laura@kypartnership.org](mailto:laura@kypartnership.org).

<http://kidsnow.ky.gov/Improving-Early-Care/Pages/-Kentucky-Strengthening-Families.aspx>

## Reflective Activity – Family Engagement Event

The framework for Kentucky Strengthening families supports small changes to your program practices and events to nurture the protective factors. This nurturing is done by intentional practices both in daily interactions with parents and at family events. Typical May and June family events at Child Care settings are ‘Muffins with Mom’ or ‘Donuts with Dad’. These events are opportunities for families to socialize during drop off time and share an experience in their child’s program.

For this activity, we will consider steps we can take to support the protective factors and healthy behaviors by using everyday actions, role modeling and useful resources. First, think about revising the event to provide healthier food options avoiding foods high in sugar and with minimal or no processed foods. You might consider Movement with our Mothers, Fruit our Fathers, Games with Grandparents or Fun with our Families.

After you select your event, a brief description of your event such as what activities, crafts and food will be served. Next list out your practices or actions at the event to support each of the protective factors. An example has been provided.

### Title of event:

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### Description of event:

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1. Families feel welcome; they are greeted when they arrive.

2.

3.

1. Parents are introduced to each other

2.

3.

1. Info on child nutrition is provided.

2.

3.

1. Parents are asked what information they would like on the parent bulletin board

2.

3.

1. Teachers role model nurturing relationship with each child

2.

3.

1. Parents and child do a craft together expresses feelings.

2.

3.