



## WHAT IS KENTUCKY STRENGTHENING FAMILIES?

**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. By supporting families and building their skills to cope with stressors, we can increase school readiness and reduce the likelihood abuse will occur in families. **Kentucky Strengthening Families** is using a nationally recognized strategy—Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework – which is coordinated nationally by the Center for the Study of Social Policy.

KYSF is funded by the Governor’s Office for Early Childhood (GOEC) through the Race to the Top/Early Learning Challenge Grant Program and the Kentucky Department for Public Health through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant Program.

### KENTUCKY STRENGTHENING FAMILIES VISION

All Kentucky Children are healthy, safe and prepared to succeed in school and in life through families that are supported and strengthened within their communities.

### KENTUCKY STRENGTHENING FAMILIES MISSION

Kentucky is strengthening families, promoting knowledge and skills, and providing access to resources and support by enhancing protective factors through family, community, and state partnerships.

## THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The Protective Factors lay the foundation for the Strengthening Families Framework. Protective factors are conditions in families and communities, which when present, help increase the health and well-being of families and children and reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect. All Kentucky families can benefit from comprehensive efforts to build protective factors. The protective factors identified for Kentucky are:

- 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 and Emotional Competence of Children**  
*Families teach children how to have healthy relationships*
- 6. Nurturing and Attachment**  
*Families ensure children feel loved and safe*

KENTUCKY  
**STRENGTHENING FAMILIES**



## BACKGROUND

In 2001, with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) began studying the role that early child care and education programs nationwide can play in strengthening families and preventing abuse and neglect. The Strengthening Families conceptual framework involves building research-based Protective Factors around young children by working differently with their families across all child- and family-serving organizations and systems. This approach includes aligning systems with protective factors, using data driven decision-making, marshaling leadership and making policy and systems changes on multiple levels.

In 2013, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood and the Kentucky Department for Public Health convened a group inclusive of many organizations that touch families to explore the implementation of the Strengthening Families framework. These organizations represented by the leadership team below made a commitment to embed the protective factors in the daily practice of government and community-based programs. In January 2014, the Leadership Team developed a strategic plan to move the **Kentucky Strengthening Families** initiative forward in the Commonwealth.

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Governor's Office of Early Childhood
- Department for Public Health, Division of Maternal and Child Health
- Cabinet for Health and Family Service, Office of Policy and Budget
- Children, Inc.
- Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities
- Department for Community Based Services, Division of Child Care
- Department for Community Based Services, Division of Protection and Permanency
- Department of Education
- Department for Libraries & Archives
- Department for Medicaid Services and Kentucky Children's Health Insurance Program (KCHIP)
- Family Resource and Youth Services Centers
- Kentucky Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
- Kentucky Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs
- Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children, Inc.
- Metro United Way
- Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky
- Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence

## KEY ASPECTS OF KENTUCKY'S WORK

In Kentucky Strengthening Families, we have a shared commitment to:

- Promoting strong families and healthy development for families prenatally through age five
- Partnering with all families and celebrating differences
- Using protective factors as a strengths-based philosophy to buffer for toxic stress
- Building knowledge and skills for individual and system change
- Creating safe, stable and nurturing environments for people to have responsive and caring relationships

### For more information online

<http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/mch/ecd/>

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