Mobilizing partners, communities and families to build family strengths, promote optimal development and reduce child abuse and neglect
FEDERAL PARTNERS

Administration for Children, Youth and Families: Children’s Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect
Administration on Children and Families, Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start
Maternal and Child Health Bureau (ECCS)
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), local Project Launch sites
Department of Defense, New Parents Program and Family Advocacy Program
THE STRENGTHENING FAMILIES APPROACH

• Benefits ALL families
• Builds on family strengths, buffers risk, and promotes better outcomes
• Can be implemented through small but significant changes in everyday actions
• Builds on and can become part of existing programs, strategies, systems and community opportunities
• Is grounded in research, practice and implementation knowledge
PRAGMATIC STARTING POINTS

- Find out what *reduces* child maltreatment, to point toward what programs should be *building*
- Assume that all families are included
- Start where families already have comfortable relationships, e.g. child care
- Build on existing programs and strategies; don’t invent a new model
What we know: Families thrive when protective factors are robust in their lives and communities
FIVE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

PARENTAL RESILIENCE

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

KNOWLEDGE of PARENTING and CHILD DEVELOPMENT

CONCRETE SUPPORT in TIMES of NEED

SOCIAL and EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE of CHILDREN
Small but significant changes

How programs help strengthen families, promote optimal child development and prevent child abuse and neglect

Program strategies that:
- Facilitate friendships and mutual support
- Strengthen parenting
- Respond to family crises
- Link families to services and opportunities
- Facilitate children’s social and emotional development
- Observe and respond to early warning signs of child abuse or neglect
- Value and support parents

Protective Factors
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children

Strengthened Families
Optimal Child Development
Reduced Child Abuse & Neglect
FEW BRAVE INNOVATORS

• Alaska
• Arkansas
• Illinois
• Missouri
• New Hampshire
• Rhode Island
• Wisconsin
LEVERS FOR IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

• Integration into policies and systems
• Professional development
• Real parent partnerships
**Parental Resilience** = Be strong and flexible

**Social Connections** = Parents need friends

**Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development** = Being a great parent is part natural and part learned

**Concrete Support in Times of Need** = We all need help sometimes

**Social and emotional competence of children** = Help your children communicate and give them the love and respect they need
This surprising “self-organizing” tipping point was quickly supported by key national organizations, nimble federal partners and a small amount of foundation funding.
Strengthening Families: Creating a New Normal

**Levers**
- Community and multi-system leaders act to build sustainable infrastructure through key levers for change:
  - Parent Partnerships
  - Policy/Systems
  - Professional Development

**Strategies**
- Community programs and worker practice consistently:
  - Facilitate friendships and mutual support
  - Strengthen parenting
  - Respond to family crises
  - Link families to services and opportunities
  - Value and support parents
  - Further children’s social and emotional development
  - Observe and respond to early warning signs of abuse and neglect

**Protective Factors**
- Families and communities build protective factors that also promote healthy outcomes:
  - Parental resilience
  - Social connections
  - Knowledge of parenting and child development
  - Concrete support in times of need
  - Social and emotional competence of children

**Results**
- Strengthened families
- Optimal child development
- Reduced child abuse & neglect

A New Normal

Families and communities, service systems and organizations:
- Focus on building protective and promotive factors to reduce risk and create optimal outcomes for children, youth and families
- Recognize and support parents as decision makers and leaders
- Value the culture and unique assets of each family
- Are mutually responsible for better outcomes for children, youth and families
www.strengtheningfamilies.net

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Questions?