

## Alabama: State Initiative Profile



### Overview

Alabama became involved in the Strengthening Families™ initiative in 2006. The Alabama Children's Trust Fund (CTF) served as the lead agency from 2006 to 2011. In 2011, CTF provided a \$30,000 grant to the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) to take over the role as lead agency. Other partners include the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers, the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Planning Group/State Blueprint Committee and early care and education providers across the state, the Alabama Department of Children's Affairs and the Alabama Department of Human Resources Child Care Services Division. The goal is to engage early care and education providers across Alabama, impacting a minimum of 1,000 parents per year through CTF funded Strengthening Families efforts. In August 2012, CTF committed an additional 2 years of funding at \$40,000 per year to continue the Strengthening Families Initiative.

### Building Strengthening Families Practice on the Ground

Alabama is partnering with the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers to build capacity within early care and education sites across the state. Additionally, CTF now requires all grantees to complete the online Strengthening Families curriculum developed by the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds. APC is working with child care programs across the state to encourage the use of the online curriculum.

### Key Aspects of the State's Work

#### *Policy/Systems Change*

Thanks to grant funding provided by CTF, work has been done to engage multiple systems. Examples of emerging systems work include: 1) engaging the Department of Human Resources to approve training for licensure credit, to embed Strengthening Families within child welfare practice and to embed Strengthening Families within the QRIS pilot; 2) engaging the Department of Children's Affairs to work toward implementing Strengthening Families within Alabama's Pre-K system and Home Visitation efforts, and 3) engaging local United Way Success By 6® initiatives as well as home visitation programs to embed the protective factors within practice.

#### *Parent Partnerships*

Building on Parent Leadership Training funded by CTF over the past three years, a group of parent leaders and professionals is in the process of implementing Community Cafés across the state.

#### *Professional Development*

The Strengthening Families online curriculum is now a approved training option to meet licensure requirements for early care and education programs. Early care and education programs engaged in Strengthening Families focus on one protective factor per month, sharing information and strategies with staff and parents.

Strengthening Families is a research-based, cost-effective strategy to increase family stability, enhance child development and reduce child abuse and neglect. It builds 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

Through the Strengthening Families Initiative, more than thirty states are shifting policy, funding and training to help programs build these protective factors with the children and families they serve. Many states are also using the Strengthening Families approach to integrate state prevention strategies, focus on families in the child welfare system and engage parents and communities.

Nationally, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) coordinates Strengthening Families and works with more than a dozen national partner organizations to create a new vision in which communities, families, institutions, service systems and organizations:

- focus on building protective and promotive factors
- 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

For more information, visit  
[www.strengtheningfamilies.net](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net)



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## 2011 QUICK FACTS

### State Coordinator:

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### SF Investment

Direct Public	\$40,000/\$112,525
Direct Private	\$16,000/\$17,000
In-kind	\$20,000/\$60,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$76,000/\$189,525</b>

### Professional Development

# individuals reached: Approx. 80  
# person hours: Approx. 160

### SF Implementation Checklist

Protective Factors used in Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems or other early childhood systems planning	✓
Protective Factors used in Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention RFP Process	✓
Protective Factors integrated into state Quality Rating and Improvement System	☒
Child Care Resource & Referral Network in state supporting program implementation	
Strengthening Families included in State Home Visiting Plan	
Strengthening Families is being implemented into child welfare system	

## Infrastructure and Sustainability

Alabama has a part-time Strengthening Families coordinator and a partnership with the University of Alabama to provide masters-level social work interns to support the effort. Additionally, the initiative has gained traction through partnerships with the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers and the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems effort.

## Evaluating Strengthening Families

CTF strategically decided to require Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) grantees to include the Protective Factors Survey (PFS) developed by the FRIENDS National Resource Center in their program evaluation plans. Grantees use the Strengthening Families self-assessment tool as well as the PFS to measure their work and report their results, along with the number of families served, monthly to CTF. The University of Alabama is evaluating the initiative and has asked all parent-focused programs to use the PFS along with the selected CTF outcomes.

## Evolving Work

Alabama is using the Strengthening Families online curriculum and will continue to add Strengthening Families sites. Alabama will also continue to engage partners and seek additional funding for sustainability. There are ongoing efforts to embed Strengthening Families within the state systems described above. Additionally, Alabama has been a Help Me Grow state for the past year. Strengthening Families and Help Me Grow have been woven together to increase the impact of both initiatives through cross training, information sharing and shared funding and resources. New work in 2013 will focus on engaging the child welfare system in Strengthening Families.

