

# Strengthening Families Protective Factors: “Bringing the Protective Factors to Life in Your Work” Modules

This series of courses was developed by the National Alliance for Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds. The content of these courses is helpful for anyone who works with children and families, including parents, practitioners, and supervisors. The seven courses are delivered by qualified trainers. The first course *Introduction to the Protective Factors Framework* is the foundation of the curriculum. The five courses that address each individual protective factor can be offered and experienced in any order that suites the trainer and practitioner. The final course, *Moving from Knowledge to Action: Wrap-Up*, is reflective in nature and is meant to be the final step in completing the curriculum. Throughout the courses you will notice three common threads that are the foundation for this approach. They are:

- The Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework – understanding and communicating the importance of how to use the Framework as we go about our everyday work.
- The Importance of Culture – how culture impacts families as they seek to build protective factors and how our own culture shapes how we individually feel, act and think.
- The Critical Role Parents Play in Strengthening Families – viewing parents as valuable partners in every phase of the work we do.

Course Title	Description	IMH Competencies Addressed
<p><b>Introduction to the Strengthening Families Protective Factors (2hr)</b></p>	<p>The Strengthening Families™ Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits ALL families</li> <li>• Builds on family strengths, buffers risk, and promotes better outcomes</li> <li>• Can be implemented through small but significant changes in everyday actions</li> <li>• Builds on and can become a part of existing programs, strategies, systems and community opportunities</li> <li>• Is grounded in research, practice and implementation knowledge.</li> </ul> <p>The five Protective Factors are the foundation of the Strengthening Families™ approach. Extensive research supports the common-sense notion that when these protective factors are present and robust in a family, the likelihood of child abuse and neglect diminish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Goals of the Course</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ List five protective factors that help keep families strong and prevent child abuse and neglect.</li> <li>○ Identify multiple strategies and concrete everyday actions that help families build those protective factors.</li> <li>○ Understand what it means to work with families in a strength-based way.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infant/very young child &amp; family centered practice</li> </ul>

<p><b>Parental Resilience (2hr)</b></p>	<p>Parental resilience is the ability to cope and bounce back from all types of challenges. Parents are continually managing different amounts of stress in their daily lives. The challenges parents face can be daunting. In the Strengthening Families framework, we think about two different components of resilience – the ability to cope with stress in general and the ability to parent well in times of stress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Goals of the Course</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Define and recognize signs of parental resilience.</li> <li>○ Identify actions you can take to help parents build their resilience.</li> <li>○ Give examples of program efforts to value and support parents.</li> <li>○ Give examples of program efforts to respond to family crises.</li> <li>○ Identify the steps you will take to integrate these ideas into your work</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infant/very young child &amp; family centered practice</li> <li>• Cultural competence</li> </ul>
<p><b>Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development (2hr)</b></p>	<p>Parents need accurate information about raising young children and the appropriate expectations for their behavior. This protective factor helps to define what parenting looks like when families have good information and skills to help their children at every stage of development. It is especially important when parents are committed to change the parenting patterns they experienced as children – and need alternatives for their own children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Goals of the Course</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Define what it means for parents to have knowledge of parenting and child development.</li> <li>○ Identify actions you can take to help strengthen parenting among families.</li> <li>○ Create a plan to integrate these ideas into your work.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding with empathy</li> <li>• Life skills</li> </ul>
<p><b>Concrete Support in Times of Need (2hr)</b></p>	<p>Every family – at some point – needs support. “Times of need” don’t only occur in families in poverty and they may not always be related to material needs. All families have times of need, whether it’s the birth of a new child, raising a child with special needs, finding academic supports, or dealing with mental illness, substance abuse, or domestic violence. Not knowing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Delivery System</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> </ul>

	<p>where to turn in a crisis or how to find help can be extraordinarily stressful for families – and cause significant trauma for children. When parents build this protective factor they know how to access services and be an advocate for their family.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Goals of the Course</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Give examples of how you can provide welcoming, non-threatening support to families.</li> <li>○ List several ways you can link to partners in the community to help families in need.</li> <li>○ Identify the challenges and opportunities culture and tradition present as we try to help families.</li> <li>○ Recognize how lack of support, when under stress, can sometimes lead to child maltreatment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>Children’s Social and Emotional Development (2hr)</b></p>	<p>Social and emotional competence is the foundation of every child’s development. It comes through the ongoing interactions between the child and the adults in her life, beginning with parents and other family members. The parent’s capability to foster the child’s ability to talk, regulate their behavior and interact positively with others is key to the child’s development. Nurturing and attachment in the earliest days and months of a baby’s life is the beginning point for social and emotional competence that develops over time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Goals of the Course</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ List several characteristics of children who are emotionally healthy and who demonstrate social skills appropriate for their age or environment.</li> <li>○ Identify what is realistic to expect in terms of social and emotional skills for children at different developmental stages.</li> <li>○ Recognize how this protective factor can help make child maltreatment less likely to occur.</li> <li>○ Give examples of how parents and other caregivers can develop strategies that will help children to grow emotionally and socially.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infant/very young child development &amp; behavior</li> </ul>

<p><b>Social Connections (2hr)</b></p>	<p>Friends, family members, neighbors and other members of a community who provide emotional support and concrete assistance are invaluable to parents. Since social isolation is strongly connected to child maltreatment, this protective factor ensures that parents are connected to people who support their parenting. Being new to a community, recently divorced or a first-time parent makes a support network even more important; it may require extra effort from programs to help families build the new relationships they need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Goals of the Course</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Understand the value of helping parents and families connect to others in a variety of ways that reduce their isolation and increase their social supports.</li> <li>○ Discuss at least three ways to encourage parents to make these connections.</li> <li>○ Create some concrete plans to assist parents in developing new friendships and finding new sources of support – in the workplace or the community.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building and maintaining relationships</li> <li>• Community Resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Moving from Knowledge to Action – Wrap-Up (2hr)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Goals of the Course</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Feel confident in your understanding of the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework: the five protective factors and everyday actions that help build the protective factors.</li> <li>○ Recognize the role that systems and policy changes can play in establishing this way of working with families as “the new normal.”</li> <li>○ Begin integrating these ideas into your work, or continue doing so if you have already started.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-awareness</li> <li>• Planning &amp; Organizing</li> </ul>