



PARTNERS IN ACTION

SAFE CHILDREN HEALTHY FAMILIES STRONG COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITY NEWS :: FALL 2007

Strengthening families through early care and education

The St. Louis Family and Community Partnership, working in partnership with Child Day Care Association is promoting the Strengthening Families Through Early Care and Education Initiative in St. Louis. This Initiative has the potential to greatly impact families by reducing child abuse and neglect and helping keep children safe and enhance their well being in their homes, schools, and community. This work is built around the framework of a set of critical protective factors.

With support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Center for the Study of Social Policy spent two years researching and identifying five protective factors that prevent child abuse and neglect. They are:

For Adults:

- + Parental resilience
- + Social Connections
- + Knowledge of parenting and child development
- + Concrete support in times of need

For Children:

- + Healthy social and emotional development

What is Strengthening Families Through Early Care & Education? The Strengthening Families Initiative (SFI) is a new, proven, cost-effective strategy to prevent child abuse and neglect. This strategy involves early childhood centers working with families to build protective factors around children. The SFI approach is based on a review of the existing research in the field of child abuse and neglect, a national study that led to the identification of 21 exemplary programs across the country, and conversations with hundreds of experts in the field, researchers, practitioners and parents.

The SFI is being implemented in seven states, including Missouri. The St. Louis Family and Community Partnership received a Children's Trust Fund Grant to work with the Child Day Care Association to promote this important initiative. Kids Hope United and other organizations are providing leadership across diverse professional disciplines such as early childcare and education, child protective services, mental health, and juvenile justice.

This Spring, over 100 participants from day care centers attended a kick-off event to learn more about this exciting initiative. Child Care Centers were then chosen to receive technical assistance to assess and implement SFI strategies in their facilities. In addition, organizations such as Kids Hope United are pioneering the use of protective factors in work with families with children of all ages. The Strengthening Families Work Group meets monthly and would welcome your input and attendance. It's next meeting is Tues. 9/25/07. For time and place contact Andi Schleicher (andi@childcarestl.org) or Dahna Willis (dwillis@kidshopeunited.org).

A number of tools are available for those who want to learn more about the protective factors approach. The website at www.cssp.org contains a host of materials: a literature review, a self-assessment tool for early childhood programs organized around protective factors, and handouts and descriptive tools on the protective factors. For information on local work, contact Dahna Willis at Kids Hope United at 314-241-4345.

(This material was prepared with contributions from Dahna Willis, Sara Barwinski and the Center for the Study of Social Policy Website.)



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MISSION

The St. Louis Family and Community Partnership is a partnership of parents, families, schools, faith communities, the St. Louis City Family Court, the Children's Division, public and private agencies, neighborhood organizations, businesses and city and state government working together to support families, prevent child abuse and neglect, and help ensure that children have permanent relationships that help them safely thrive with families in their own communities.



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ST. LOUIS FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS AND MEMBERSHIPS

We encourage all to support the SLFCP and the work that is done by joining or contributing.

CONTRIBUTIONS:

Individual:

Andi Schleicher
Fran Johnson
Patricia Griffith
Jerri Michael
CDCA

Community Organizations

CDCA
Kids Hope United
Epworth
Covenant House
Sara Barwinski

Other Contributions

Children's Division Postage for Newsletter
Children's Advocacy Center Postage for Newsletter

MEMORIALS:

Gloria McMillen
From Frances Johnson
Rube Gorden
From Frances Johnson

To join as a member or to contribute, give in memory of someone or to celebrate an occasion send a check to SLFCP, c/o VCR, 2433 N. Grand BLVD, St. Louis, MO 63106.

(Suggested level of giving: \$5 for Low Income or Foster Parent, \$10-\$25 for Individual or Family, \$25-\$50 for Grassroots organization, \$50-\$100 for Community organization)



Partnership Announces FST Pilot in Schools

Developing individualized plans for families through the use of Family Support Teams is a "best-practice" strategy to strengthen families and keep kids safe. We are proud to announce that the St. Louis Family and Community Partnership (SLFCP) is teaming up with the St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) to offer a Family Support Team pilot project at two schools this academic year.

Ashland Elementary and Yeatman Liddell Preparatory Junior High have been chosen to launch this important initiative. The SLPS District is supporting the initiative by devoting support staff (Counselors, Social Workers, and Nurses) to serve as the core team to coordinate and facilitate family team meetings for their schools. Community partners such as the Dream Center, teachers and parent volunteers will also serve on teams to help engage identified parents and support them in meeting their goals.

This strength-based approach respects the "voice and choice" of families in improving their life together. By mobilizing formal and informal resources in a coordinated plan the team is able to address issues impacting the health, safety and well-being of children and their readiness to learn in school. SLFCP received a grant from the Children's Trust Fund to provide training, technical assistance and evaluation of this exciting project. If you have questions or would like to volunteer to support this initiative please contact Sara Barwinski (sarabarwinski@hotmail.com).



SUGGESTIONS FOR PROFESSIONALS TO ASSIST WITH MAINTAINING GOOD ATTENDANCE

Kenneth Simmons is the Supervisor of the Child Protection and Permanency Unit at the St. Louis Family Court. In 2002 he and Leslie Bischoff (Children's Division) and Melissa Saykes (School Social Worker, SLPS) partnered with Dr. Anderson, then Principal of Clark Elementary School. Their focus was to improve the attendance of children at Clark Elementary School where 99% of the children were at poverty level. Through a process of being linked to the school and spending time at the school talking to children, parents, teachers, and others the attendance dramatically improved. Joint home visits with the teachers to homes, Family Support Team Meetings, and constant attention to attendance increased the attendance from 82% at the beginning of the year to 96% at the end of the 2002 to 2003 school year. In this material Ken shares some of the strategy that can be easily adapted by others working with children.

- At the beginning of the school year, review the attendance figures from the previous school year and identify a group of students that could possibly use more resources and support. It's helpful to set a maximum number for absences and target each child that has exceeded that number. Any child that has, for example, exceeded 15 absences the previous school year may be identified as a child that could benefit from services.
- Conduct home visits with the teacher and other professionals involved with the family. These include the school social worker, school nurse, and/or counselor, etc. Not only will such a visit assist with "getting the attention" of the parent, Many of the parents visited seemed to appreciate the effort spent by the individuals to provide support for them and their families.
- Provide lists of resources for services and programs. For the most part, the families are able to identify the various problem areas or issues affecting the family. Unfortunately, they also often have no idea regarding how to obtain the appropriate help and support.
- Provide rewards for the children that are not having attendance problems. The children with attendance problems are often the ones that receive the most attention. While this attention is generally negative, it's attention nevertheless and as we all know, some children thrive on any kind of attention. By rewarding the children with good attendance, you are also providing them with "positive" attention. These children may then be motivated to maintain good attendance.
- Tardiness must also be looked at as well as when a child consistently leaves early. Consistently being tardy will affect the child for the rest of the day. It may also mean that the child has not had breakfast which, again, can affect learning.
- Don't wait until absences are high in number! After a child has missed 3-5 days start assessing the situation and start providing services to the family if needed!

Most parents are extremely receptive to the intervention of professionals. During the year at Clark I can honestly say that we never encountered hostility from the parents. We did not ever hear "I don't want my child to have an education" rather, we were invited in to the homes and lives of the families as we worked solutions. And often, we did find, *that Educational Neglect is often just the Tip of the Iceberg!*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, Sept. 7...Team Practice Review WG Meeting
Wed. Sept. 12...Council Executive Meeting
Friday, Sept. 14...Building Community Partnerships WG
Tues. Sept. 18...Self-Evaluation WG Meeting
Thurs., Sept. 20...Communications WG
Monday, Sept. 24...Recruitment, Training, and Support WG Meeting
Tues. Sept. 25...Strengthening Families WG Meeting
Friday, Oct. 5...Team Practice Review WG
Wed. Oct. 10...Council Executive Meeting
Friday, Oct. 12...Building Community Partnerships
Tues. Oct. 16...Self-Eval WG
Thurs. Oct. 18...Communications WG
Monday, Oct. 22...Recruitment, Training, and Support WG Meeting
Tues. Oct. 23...Strengthening Families

Partners in Action

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Articles appreciated and welcome.

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