



May 2008

This is the first newsletter for the Kansas Strengthening Families Plan. Newsletters will be sent out regularly to keep stakeholders updated on news or announcements, tips for implementing the plan, and stories of the plan in action.

Background of the Plan in Kansas

The Kansas Strengthening Families Plan (KSF Plan) is part of the State's vision to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect and to make Kansas the best place to raise a child. The Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund (KCCTF) is acting as the convener in developing a statewide plan that unifies efforts, coordinates resources, and strengthens and supports families to achieve these goals.

Kansas has many efforts underway in both child welfare and early childhood communities to enhance funding and programming to promote healthy child development while also reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect. The Plan builds on existing efforts and reframes child abuse and neglect to embed prevention strategies into existing systems in Kansas. These efforts not only work to prevent child abuse and neglect, but also have a global focus of strengthening support for all families in Kansas.

The Kansas Strengthening Families Plan began when a team of Kansans was selected for a competitive spot in the PREVENT (Preventing Violence through Education, Networking and Technical Assistance) Institute. The Kansas PREVENT Team facilitated the development of the KSF Plan by bringing together stakeholders from Child and Family Services Review, the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) network, state agencies, parents, and all other interested parties. The Plan is a result of the collaborative work among these diverse participants.

Center for the Study of Social Policy

The KSF Plan is shaped by work done at the [Center for the Study of Social Policy \(CSSP\)](#). CSSP developed the Strengthening Families Plan out of response to unchanging rates of child abuse and neglect over the last 40 years. Unlike traditional child abuse prevention programs, the Strengthening Families Plan differs in these ways:

- Located in the early childhood education system
- Focus is on protective factors rather than identifying risks
 - Protective Factors include:
 - Parental Resilience
 - Social Connections

- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children
- Rather than removing children from their homes, works to overcome individual causes of child abuse and neglect

KSFP and the Kansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (KECCS) Connection

KSFP supports the Kansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (KECCS) Plan through the goal focused on Family Supports. In alignment with the KECCS Plan, the KSF Plan uses a prevention framework that promotes protective factors and minimizes risk factors for all children and families by bridging a variety of disciplines, agencies, services, and prevention approaches. This Plan embeds the strategies and evidence-based practices that create optimum living and learning environments for young children into the Kansas early childhood infrastructure and service delivery system.

The two Plans will also share a connection through the new KSF Plan website. The KSF Plan will be linked to the KECCS implementation tracking tool. Agencies will be able to add activities to either website and the activity will be logged for both Plans. If you're an agency that will be utilizing both Plans, this will make it easy to keep track of activities and generate reports in one place.

KSF Plan Website

The KSF Plan now has a website! It can be found at <http://ksfplan.org>. Here you will be able to find information about the KSF Plan, news and updates, and an implementation tracking tool so you can track your activities related to the KSF Plan.

KSF Plan in the community

Shannon Zaring, a home child care provider in Bonner Springs, is part of the KSF Plan pilot project in Kansas. Shannon wanted to share her experience working with KSF Plan and how it has shaped her child care center and her relationship with parents. Her experience is below:

As an EXCEL participant in the Kansas Infant/Toddler Project I work with my local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency and participate in the Strengthening Families pilot project in our state. I continually look for new ways to get parents involved with my programs and enhance their interactions with their own children, and this project was the perfect way to do so.

The specific training that I was required to attend and the trainings that were organized by the parents were very insightful. It was great to attend a training with the parents and listen to the information together and then be able to ask questions to the instructor. It gave each one of us the opportunity to see why we handle issues a little differently, but also how we can still come together to give their child the consistency they need between home and child care.

I also liked the way the parents got involved in planning the meetings on their own. I was able to sit back and watch them work together, learn about each family, and respect the differences each one brings with them. The parents divided up the responsibilities among themselves and 95 to 100% participated in the trainings. At the end of each training we did a family event with all the parents and children, either going on a picnic, visiting a farmstead, or just playing in a gym with all the parents and children interacting with each other. As a child care program the families have asked that we continue doing these trainings even after the Strengthening Families project is over because they

found it very beneficial to themselves and their families. As an early childhood educator this just opens the door for even better communication between families and their early childhood educator.

Tools to Strengthen Families

Do you wonder how your program can begin working on building protective factors in families? The Center for the Study of Social Policy has a self-assessment tool to measure how well an agency is facilitating friendships and mutual support with parents, strengthening parenting skills, responding to family crises, linking families to services and opportunities, facilitating children's social and emotional development, observing and responding to early warning signs of abuse or neglect, and valuing and supporting parents. This self-assessment can be found at the [Center for the Study of Social Policy website](#).

Questions or comments about the KSF Plan newsletter? Contact us at ksfplan@ku.edu.