



Missouri's most trusted child care resource.

1000 Executive Parkway Drive, Suite 103  
St. Louis, MO 63141-6369  
800-200-9017  
www.mo.childcareaware.org

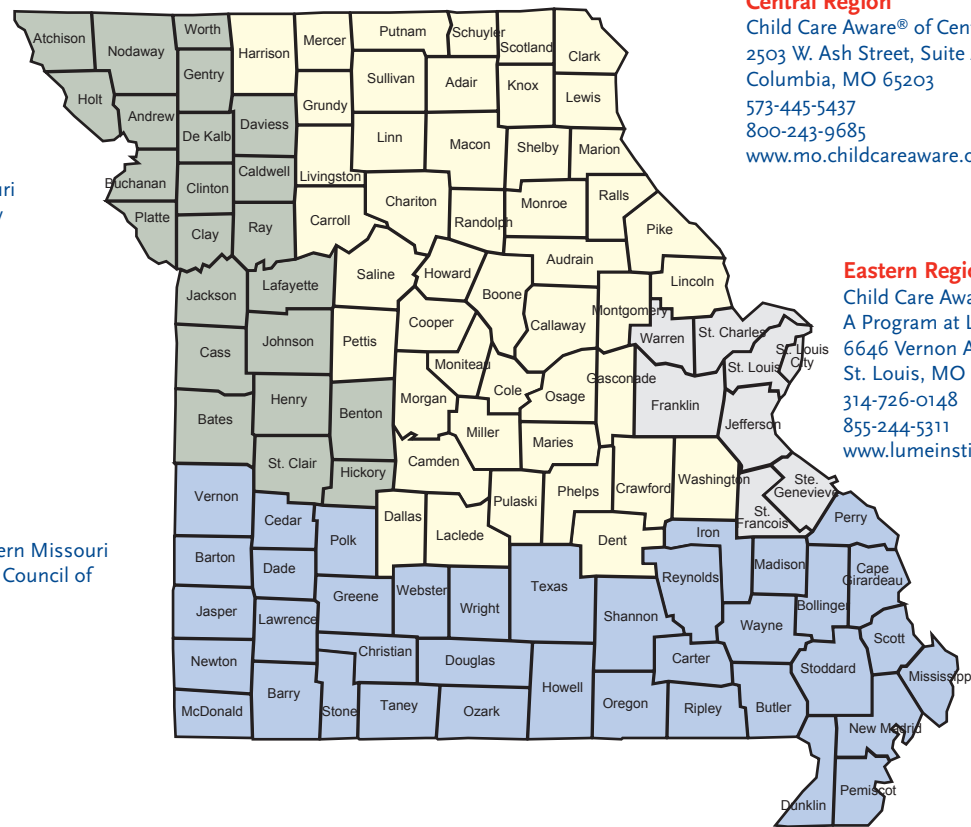


Funding provided by the Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division, Early Childhood and Prevention Service Section. (Margo ???)



Contact a Child Care Aware® of Missouri Agency for more information or to find workshops in your area

**Western Region**  
Child Care Aware® of Western Missouri  
A Program at The Family Conservancy  
444 Minnesota Ave, Suite 200  
Kansas City, KS 66101  
913-342-1110  
800-755-0838  
www.thefamilyconservancy.org



**Central Region**  
Child Care Aware® of Central Missouri  
2503 W. Ash Street, Suite A  
Columbia, MO 65203  
573-445-5437  
800-243-9685  
www.mo.childcareaware.org

**Eastern Region**  
Child Care Aware® of Eastern Missouri  
A Program at LUME Institute  
6646 Vernon Avenue  
St. Louis, MO 63130  
314-726-0148  
855-244-5311  
www.lumeinstitute.org

**Southern Region**  
Child Care Aware® of Southern Missouri  
An Operating Agency of the Council of Churches of the Ozarks  
1910 E. Meadowmere  
Springfield, MO 65804  
417-887-3545  
800-743-8497  
www.ccozarks.org



# Strengthening Families Framework

A Guide for Early Care Professionals



The small steps you take leave big footprints in the lives of children and parents.

Five Protective Factors are the foundation of the Strengthening Families Framework: parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children. Research supports the common-sense notion that these Protective Factors lower the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. These protective factors also build family strengths and create a family environment that promotes the best child and youth development.

## The Protective Factors

### Parental Resilience (Being Strong and Flexible)

No one can eliminate stress from parenting, but a parent's ability to "bounce back" can affect how a parent deals with stress. This ability to manage and bounce back from all types of challenges that emerge in every family's life is called resilience. It means finding ways to solve problems, build and sustain trusting relationships, and knowing how to seek help when necessary.

### Social Connections (Adults Need Friends)

Friends, family members, neighbors and community members provide emotional support. They help solve problems, offer parenting advice and give concrete assistance to parents. Networks of support are important to parents and also offer ways for people to "give back." Giving back is an important part of self-esteem as well as a benefit for the community. Families who are cut off from social connections may need help in reaching out to build positive relationships.

### Concrete Support in Times of Need (We All Need Help Sometimes)

Meeting basic needs like food, shelter, clothing and health care is necessary for families to thrive. Likewise, when families have a crisis such as domestic violence, mental illness or substance abuse, more services and supports need to be in place. These added supports provide stability and help for family members to get through the crisis.

### Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development (Being a Great Parent is Part Natural/Part Learned)

Good information about child development and what to expect in children's behavior at every age help parents to see their children in a more positive light and promote their healthy development. Information can come from many sources such as family members, parent education classes and surfing the internet. Parents who experienced negative childhood experiences may need extra help to change the parenting patterns they learned as children.

### Social and Emotional Competence of Children (Adults Need to Help Children to Communicate)

A child or youth who can play and work positively with others, control their behavior and clearly communicate their feelings will have more positive relationships. Problem behaviors or delayed development create extra stress for families. Catching problems early and offering help can head off negative results and keep development on track.

## Strengthening families

**PROTECTIVE FACTORS:**  
Five Protective Factors are the foundation of the Strengthening Families approach & diminish the likelihood of child abuse & neglect:

- Parental Resilience
- Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development
- Social Connections
- Concrete Supports in Times of Need
- Social & Emotional Competence



www.ctf4kids.org Strong Families. Safe Kids

## Program strategies that build protective factors

Most people who work with children and families are already doing things to help build Protective Factors. Strengthening Families identifies seven key strategies that great programs use to build protective factors with families. The same strategies often help build more than one protective factor. While the strategies work in many different kinds of programs, the ways programs use them depend on the culture, concerns, values and traditions of the families they serve. People working in community programs, early care and education, child welfare, family support and the many other places can use these strategies to support families and children.

*Here are seven strategies and simple steps for successful implementation:*

### 1 Value and support parents

- Have a warm relationship with each parent and with other members of the child's family
- Keep information about children and families confidential
- Have a place where parents can sit comfortably and talk with you
- Show respect for parents' points of view
- Make an effort to honor parents' special requests for their children, such as providing vegetarian meals

### 2 Assist in developing friendships and mutual support

- Introduce parents to each other
- Provide a welcoming space for parents to talk informally with each other
- Help parents find ways to communicate with each other, such as having a family directory
- Share ideas for parents to get together outside of the child care program, such as weekend activities like going to the playground or children's birthday parties

### 3 Strengthen parenting

- Model warm and responsive interactions with children
- Use appropriate child guidance techniques
- Discuss parenting and child development issues whenever a parent asks for information or it appears that a parent needs support
- If concerned about a parent's parenting skills, connect the parent to resources and supports that may help to address the parenting issues

### 4 Support children's social and emotional development

- Recognize children's feelings, name them, and use teaching aids like books and puppets to help children understand feelings
- Encourage children to express their feelings through words, artwork, expressive play, and actions
- Encourage children to form friendships, engage in cooperative play, use polite language and manners, and respect differences in others.
- Help parents understand their child's social and emotional development by giving parents ideas on how to promote their child's social and emotional learning at home.

### 5 Link families to services and opportunities

- Talk to parents about their interests, skills, needs, and goals for themselves and their children
- Encourage parents to share information about community resources with each other, such as toy exchanges, resale shops, playgrounds, and family activities
- Provide access to up-to-date information about various resources and services that are available in the community
- If there is a need to make referrals to outside services, follow-up with parents to see if they used the referral and, if so, were they happy with the services

### 6 Respond to family crises

- Let parents know that they can turn to you times of crisis by sharing materials and policies when families enroll in the program
- Maintain resource and referral linkages to crisis services such as food pantries, domestic violence services, shelters, mental health services, economic supports, legal assistance, etc.
- Participate in training opportunities about ways to respond to families in crisis

### 7 Observe and respond to early warning signs of abuse or neglect

- Observe how parents treat and talk with their child and the child's behavior around parents
- Observe how children are dressed, how clean they are, if they are hungry, or if they are over-tired
- Have a plan regarding how to report child abuse and neglect
- Participate in training opportunities about child abuse and neglect prevention and mandated reporting

### Seven Strategies to Build Protective Factors

1. Value and support parents
2. Assist in Developing Friendships and Mutual Support
3. Strengthen Parenting
4. Support Children's Social and Emotional Development
5. Link Families to Services and Opportunities
6. Respond to Family Crises
7. Observe and Respond to Early Warning Signs of Abuse and Neglect

## Prevention is Key. Help Spread the Word.

The Children's Trust Fund (CTF) has a newly refreshed DVD entitled **Never Shake: Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome & Safe Sleep for your Baby.**

### Be Sure to Get Yours!

The DVD includes English, English Captioned & Spanish versions of the videos. It contains the most current information about the dangers of shaking & the importance of safe sleep environments.

The DVD is **available at no cost** to Missouri hospitals, healthcare providers, child care providers, safe crib programs, home visitors, parent educators, schools, other child serving agencies, etc. to use as an educational tool to share with new parents & other caregivers.

The DVD & related brochures may be ordered from CTF at [www.ctf4kids.org](http://www.ctf4kids.org), [ctf@oa.mo.gov](mailto:ctf@oa.mo.gov) or 573-751-5147. If you have internet access you may also view the DVD through the CTF website.



**By working together, we can help strengthen families & keep babies safe.**

*The information in this brochure was adapted from the Center for the Study of Social Policy website. Please visit the website at [www.cssp.org](http://www.cssp.org) for more information on the Strengthening Families framework and the strategies that you can implement to build the five protective factors. You can also contact a Child Care Aware® of Missouri Agency for information and workshops on relevant topics. See the map on the back page to find the agency for your specific area.*