



# **The Strengthening Families Initiative**

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## **An Introduction**

# Strengthening Families is:

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A strategic, feasible approach to child abuse prevention that is:

- systematic,
- national,
- reaches large numbers of very young children, and
- will have impact long before abuse or neglect occurred



# Early care and education programs can be central because they offer:

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- Daily contact with parents and children
- Uniquely intimate relationship with families
- A universal approach of positive encouragement and education for families
- An early warning and response system at the first sign of trouble



## Quality Early Care & Education

### Program Strategies That:

- Facilitate friendships and mutual support
- Strengthen parenting
- Respond to family crises
- Link families to services and opportunities
- Value and support parents
- Facilitate children's social and emotional development
- Observe and respond to early warning signs of child abuse or neglect

## Protective Factors

Parental Resilience

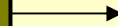
Social Connections

Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development

Concrete supports in times of need

Social & Emotional Competence of Children

CAN Prevention



# The Research Process

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Step 1: Search the evidence to find out what factors influence child abuse and neglect

Step 2: Explore the connection between factors that prevent child abuse and neglect and what quality early childhood programs do to build them

Step 3: Identify programs that build the factors and learn how they do it

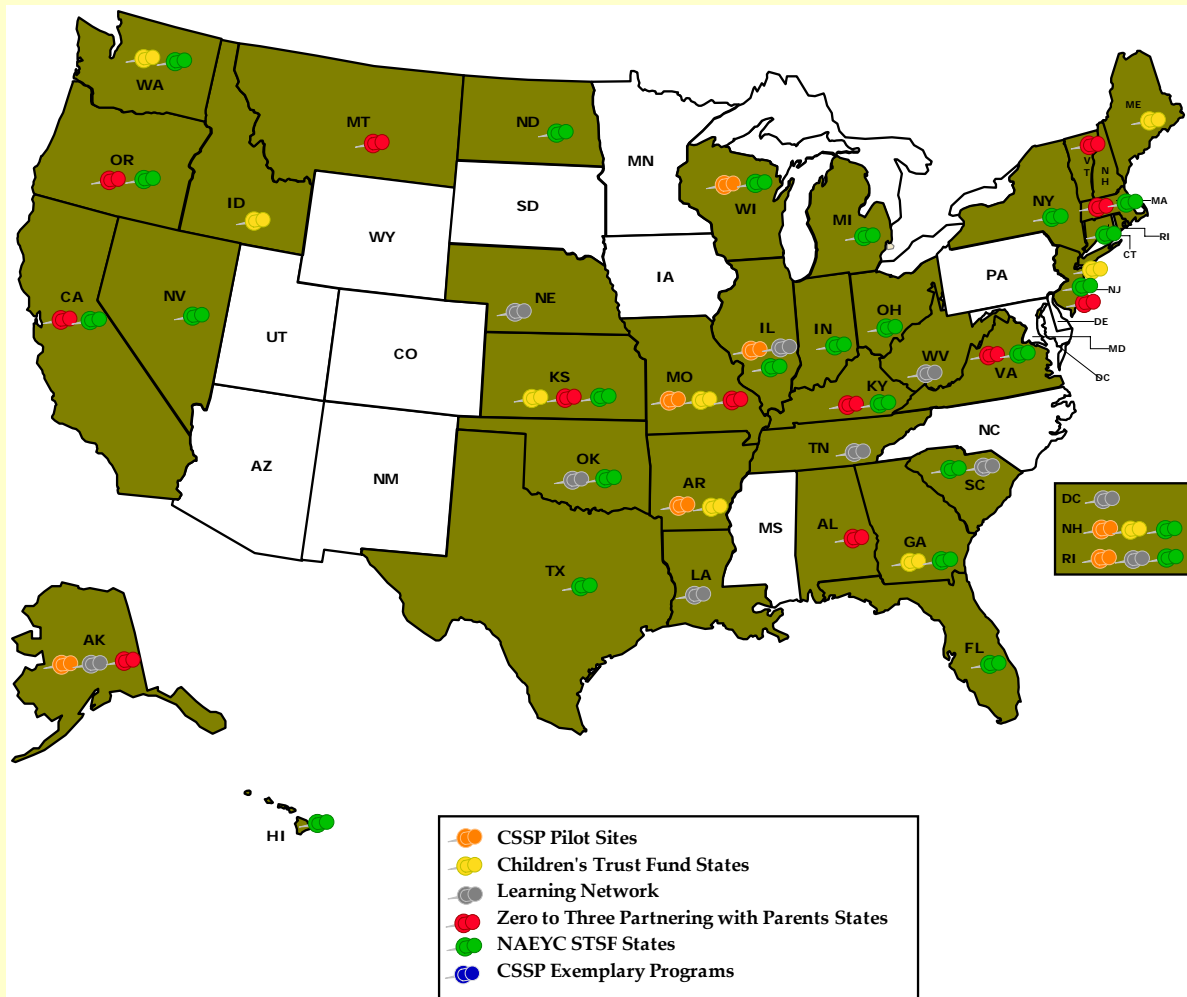
Step 4: Learn about policy and practice changes needed to infuse the model statewide through a partnership with 7 pilot states

# Getting to a National Reach

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- 33 states have Strengthening Families leadership teams
- SFI is being supported by a number of national partner organizations
- Interest and support from Federal Partners
- Expanding funding for the approach
- National leadership summit

# The National Reach of SFI



# A reasonable estimate by 2008

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- Total centers: 34,614
- Total children 0-5 in child care in these states: 2,873,966



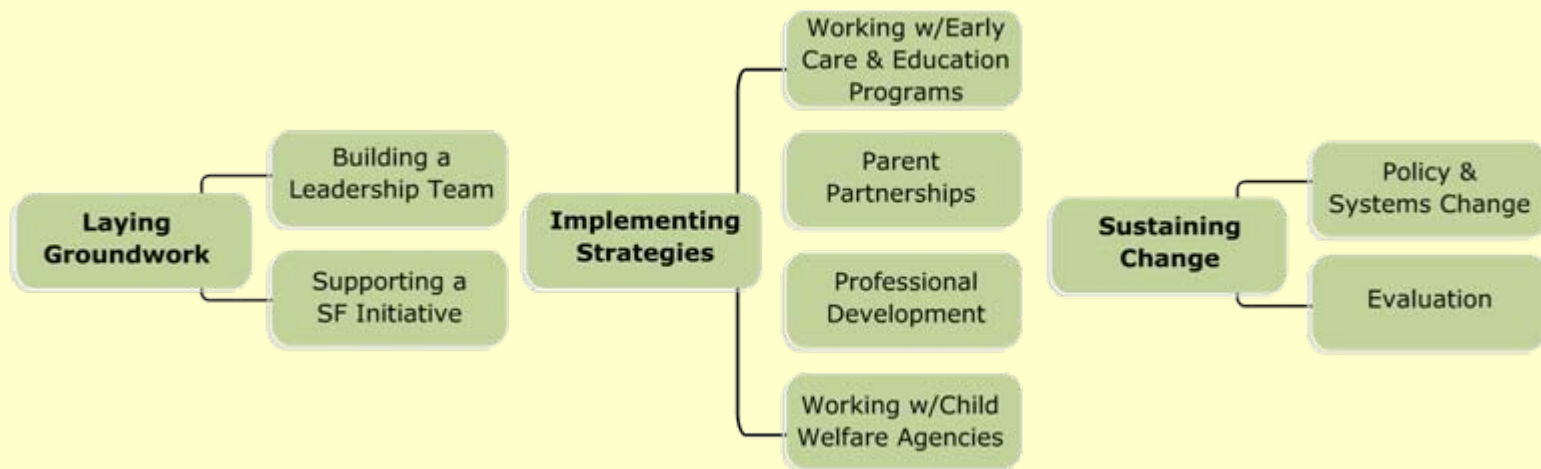
# Hallmarks for Statewide Implementation

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- More ECE programs use the protective factors framework
- Parent leadership is demonstrated at all levels
- Integration of Strengthening Families into Early Care and Education initiatives in many settings is evident
- Early Care and Education and child welfare services (CWS) build stronger, mutually beneficial relationships
- Documentation describes key decision points and provides evidence that the “Hallmarks” are being achieved

# The Framework for State Implementation

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# Program Implementation

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- Use of the self-assessment to develop a Strengthening Families action plan

IN MOST STATES

- Training on protective factors and family strengthening

IN SOME STATES

- Small pots of funds for action plan implementation
- Learning networks

# Where are we going from here?

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- SFI Network
- Specific focus on the ECE/CW linkages
- Identifying funding and strategies for research and evaluation
- Goal of policy infusion at federal and state levels
- Exploring application of ideas outside of ECE sector
- Increased focus on parent partnerships

# The Network

## Public Commitment/Sustainability

- Strategic Communications
  - Policy Agenda
- Relationship Building Strategy
  - Celebration Strategies
  - Parent Partnership

## Knowledge Development

- Learning Circles (Evaluation, Prof. Dev., Parent Partnerships, CW/EC linkages, Home-based providers, Pre-K, Disporportionality/Equity)
  - Ongoing Tracking
- Strategy briefs/Papers/videos, etc.
  - Meetings/symposia
  - Field Research—storytelling/documentation
  - Tool development

## Learning and Support

### DIY TA\*

- Training Marketplace
- Reviewed curricula & providers
- Electronic Library/Market place

### Peer TA

- Mentoring/matching
- Cross-site visits
- Peer matches
- Meetings
- Conference calls

### Implementation Leadership

- Strategic Planning
- Info/Persuasion
- Topic Consultation
- Highlight Success
- Mentor & coach

## Materials/Dissemination

- Electronic Library (vetted Materials)
  - Market Place
  - State Reports
- Links to Partners

\* Do It Yourself  
Technical Assistance