



# Strengthening Families: A prevention and promotion strategy



**Strengthening  
Families**

An initiative  
of CSSP

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Center for the Study of Social Policy  
Linkages Conference  
Child and Family Policy Institute of California  
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# Overview of Strengthening Families

NEW LOOK!

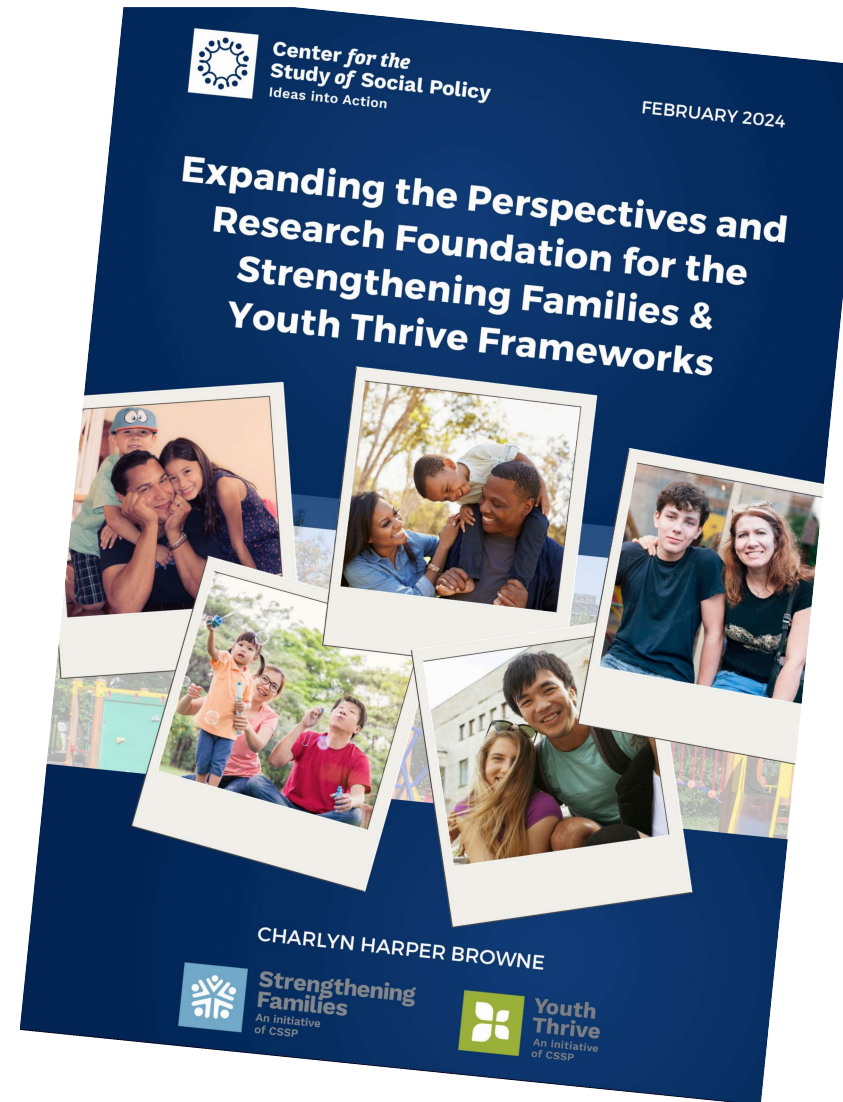


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# Hot off the press!

- ❖ Expanded understanding of what influences families' protective factors
- ❖ Inclusion of newer research that supports the protective factors framework - and terminology that has evolved in recent years



<https://cssp.org/resource/expanding-the-perspectives-and-research-foundation-for-the-strengthening-families-youth-thrive-frameworks/>



## The Strengthening Families Approach

A set of core values that should guide service delivery and program practice designed to support families in building their protective factors.

## The Protective Factors Framework

A research-informed set of interrelated attributes of individuals, families, and communities that both reduce the impact of risk factors and promote healthy development and well-being.

# Foundational Values of the Strengthening Families Approach

**Employ a Social-  
Ecological Approach**

**Adopt a Strengths-  
Based Perspective**

**Recognize and  
Respond to  
Oppression and  
Privilege**

**Incorporate an  
Intersectional Frame  
of Reference**

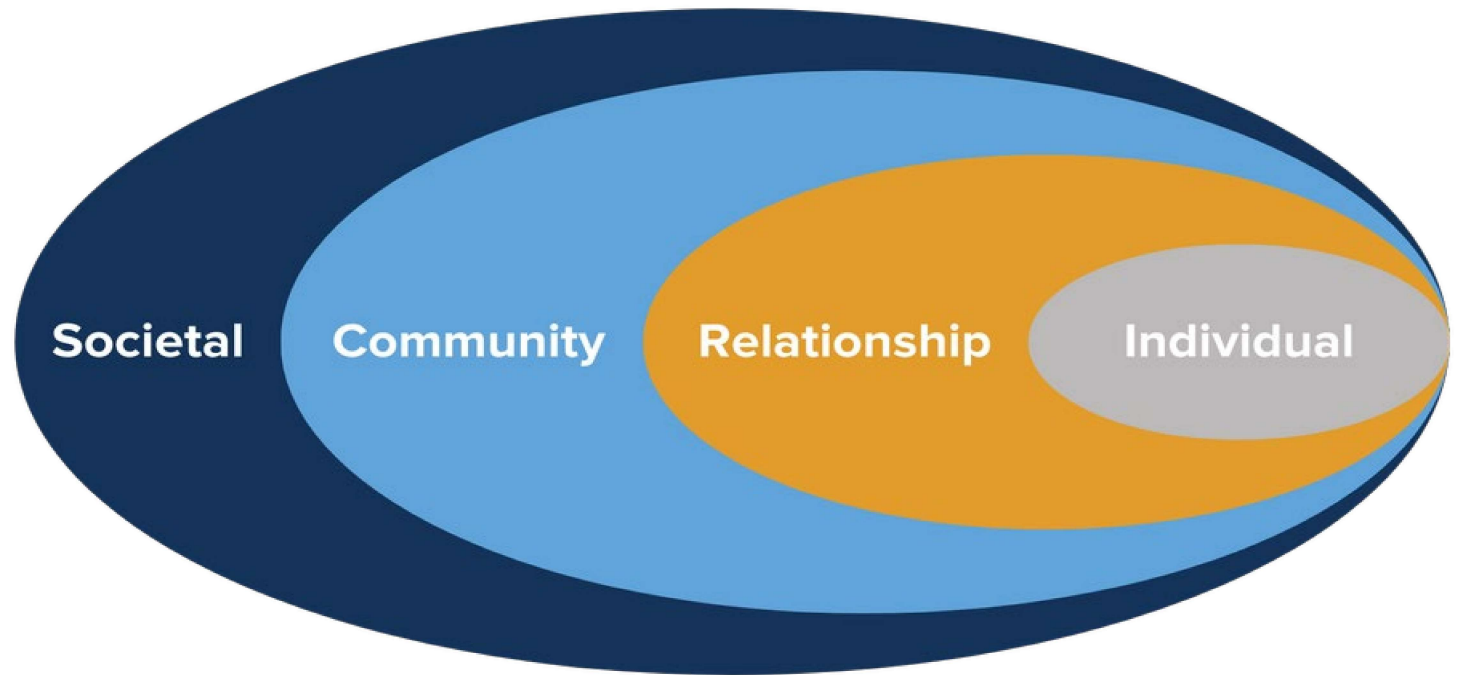
**Demonstrate Cultural  
Responsiveness,  
Cultural Humility, and  
Intellectual Humility**

**Amplify Constituent  
Voice and Power**

**Pursue Equity and  
Justice for All  
Children, Youth, and  
Families**

# Employ a Social-Ecological Approach

Employ an approach that considers community, cultural, economic, political, systemic, and ideological issues, along with individual and relational issues, that promote or threaten the protective factors.



# Adopt a Strengths-Based Perspective

Adopt a perspective regarding children's, parents', and families' intrinsic value and mobilize their assets to promote healthy development and well-being, address problems, and heal.



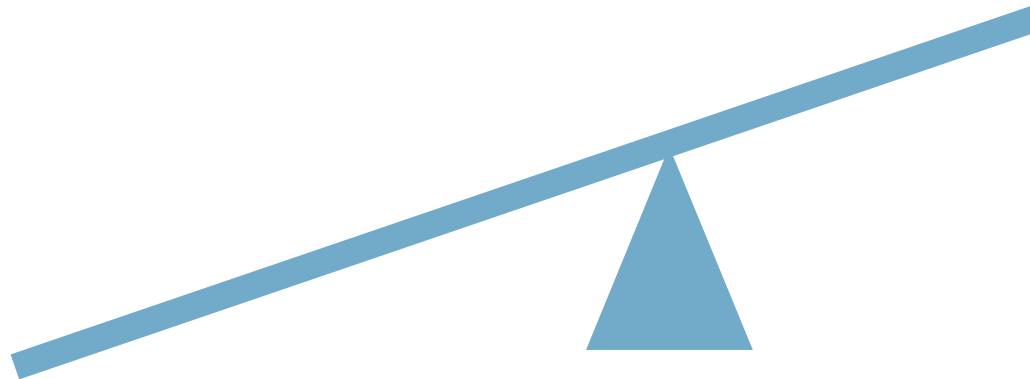
Protective factors,  
strengths,  
and assets



Risk factors,  
challenges,  
and stressors

# Recognize and Respond to Oppression and Privilege

Recognize how systems of oppression and privilege become rooted in the consciousness of individuals and society and unfairly advantage some while disadvantaging others.

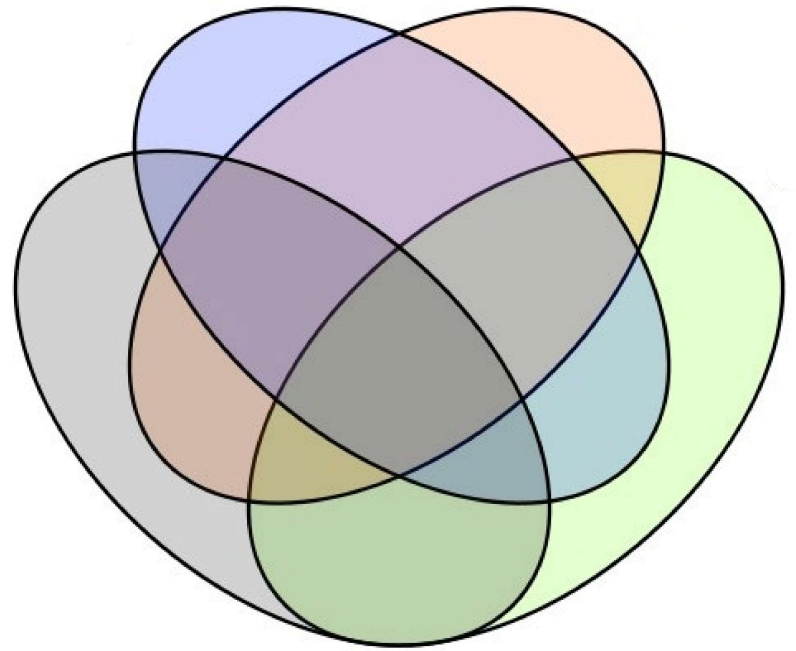


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# Incorporate an Intersectional Frame of Reference

Incorporate an intersectional frame of reference to analyze and inform a more inclusive understanding of the experiences and specific needs of children, youth, parents, & families.



# Demonstrate Cultural Responsiveness, Cultural Humility, and Intellectual Humility

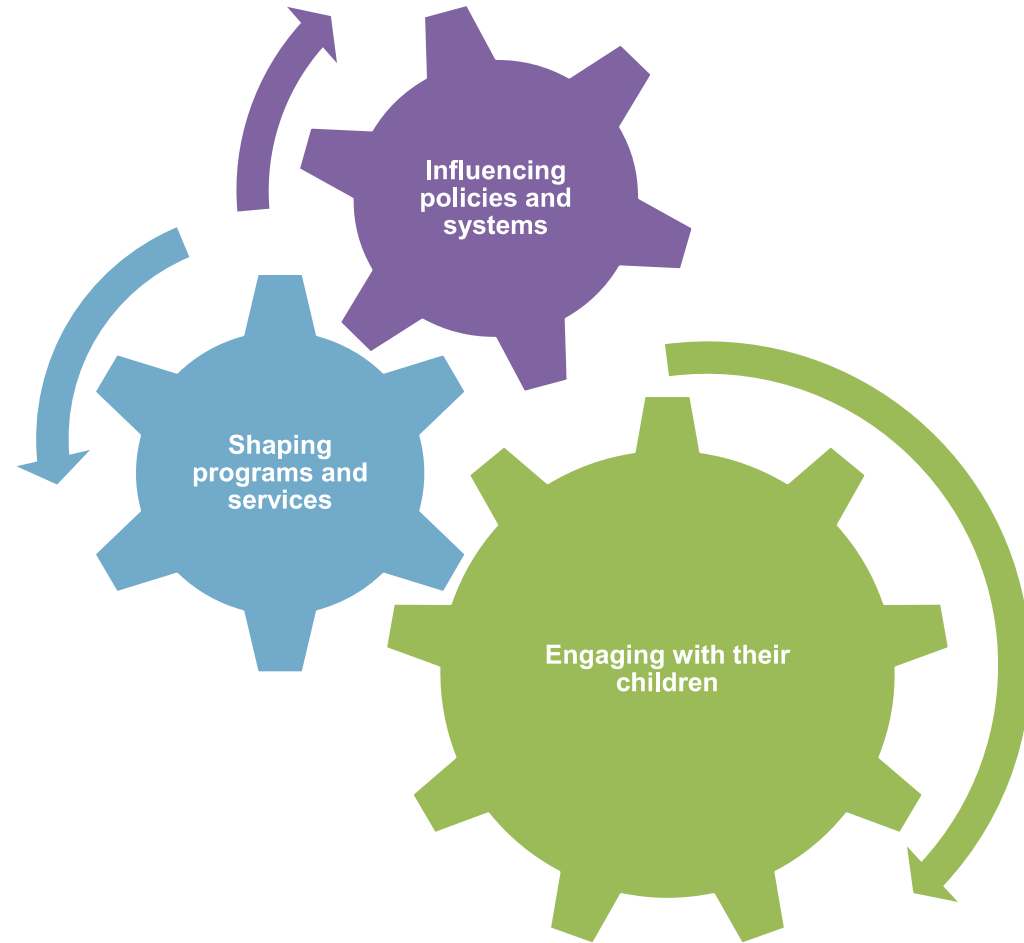
Demonstrate respect for cultural differences; engage in self-reflection about their attitudes toward different identity groups; and learn from others' experiences and perspectives.



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# Amplify Constituent Voice and Power

Amplify parents' voice and power in defining their goals; influencing their family's lives; and helping to shape early childhood programs, practices, policies, and systems.



# Pursue Equity and Justice for All Children, Youth, and Families

Pursue equity and justice for all children, parents, and families as an ethical obligation in the implementation of the Strengthening Families framework.



- Which of these values resonate the most with you?
- Which are most salient when working with families living in poverty?
- Do any of them feel like a significant shift from your current approach?

**Social-Ecological  
Approach**

**Strengths-Based  
Perspective**

**Oppression and  
Privilege**

**Intersectional  
Frame of  
Reference**

**Cultural  
Responsiveness,  
Cultural Humility,  
and Intellectual  
Humility**

**Constituent Voice  
and Power**

**Equity and Justice  
for All Children,  
Youth, and  
Families**



**Risk factors**  
are not  
**predictive factors**  
because of  
**protective factors**

Dr. Carl Bell, University of Illinois

**Parental  
Resilience**



**Social  
Connections**

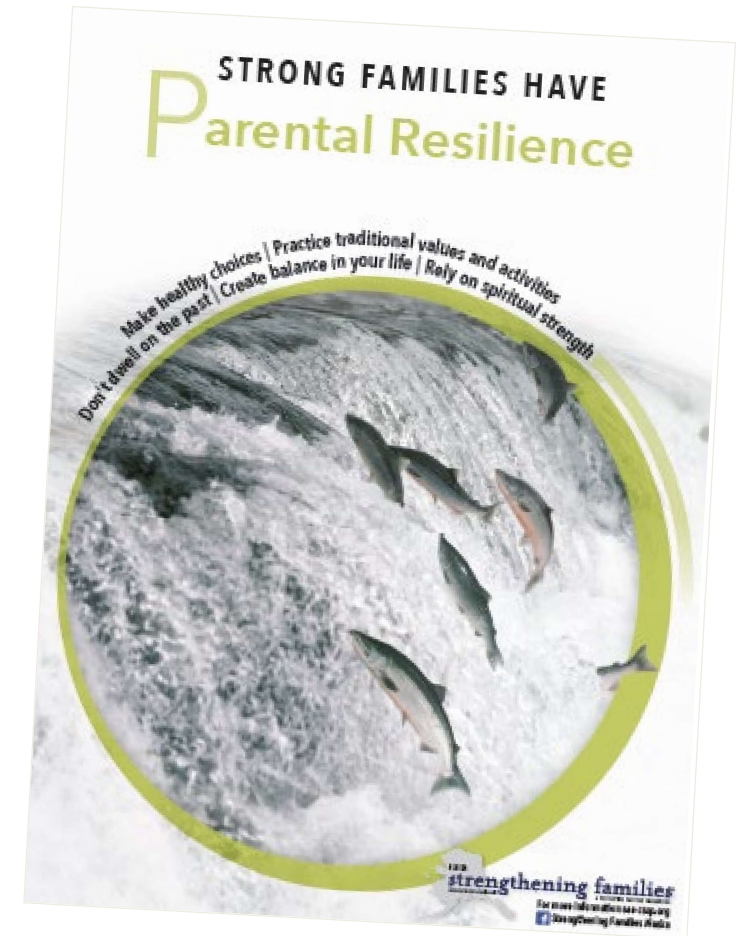
**Concrete  
Support**

**Knowledge of  
Parenting & Child  
Development**

**Social & Emotional  
Competence**

# Parental Resilience

Managing stress and functioning well—facilitated by individual, relational, community, or societal factors—when faced with stressors, adversity, or trauma



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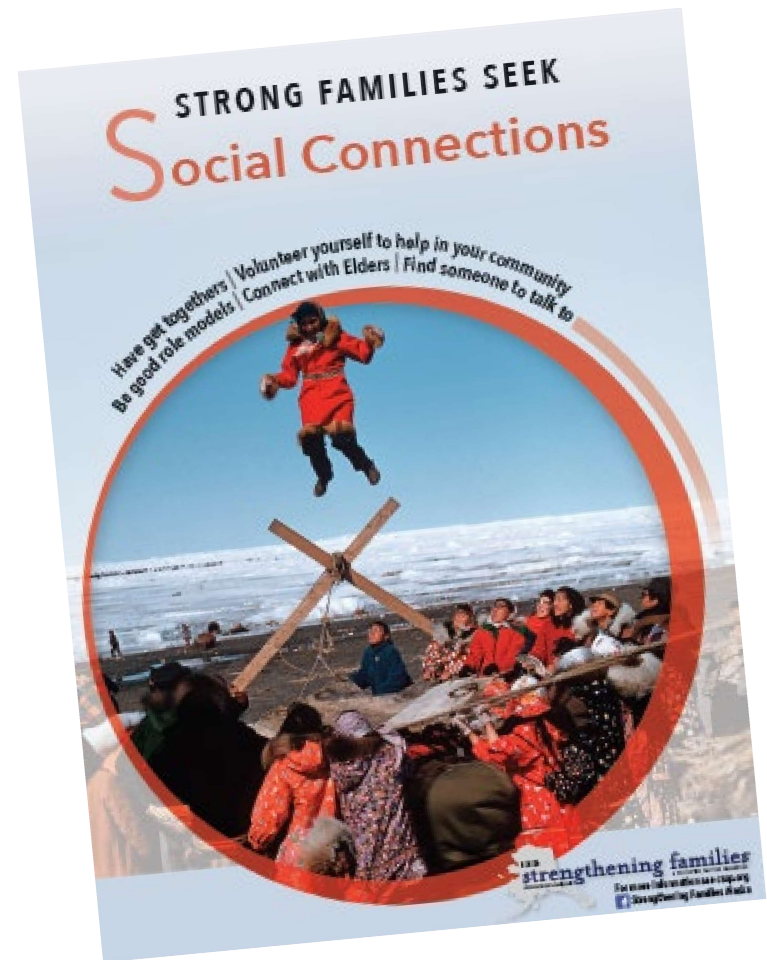


## Resilience – When families are struggling

- Parents and children may each have a history of trauma
- Co-occurring issues (DV, substance abuse, special needs of children) can make resilience feel out of reach
- Parents may doubt themselves and their ability to provide or care for their children
- Parents are fearful of CW intervention and worry about what could happen to their children in hostile environments
- Resistance may manifest as non-compliance

# Social Connections

Healthy, meaningful, trusting, and sustained relationships with people, institutions, communities, or a higher power that promote a sense of connectedness, belonging, and mattering.



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## Social Connections – When families are struggling

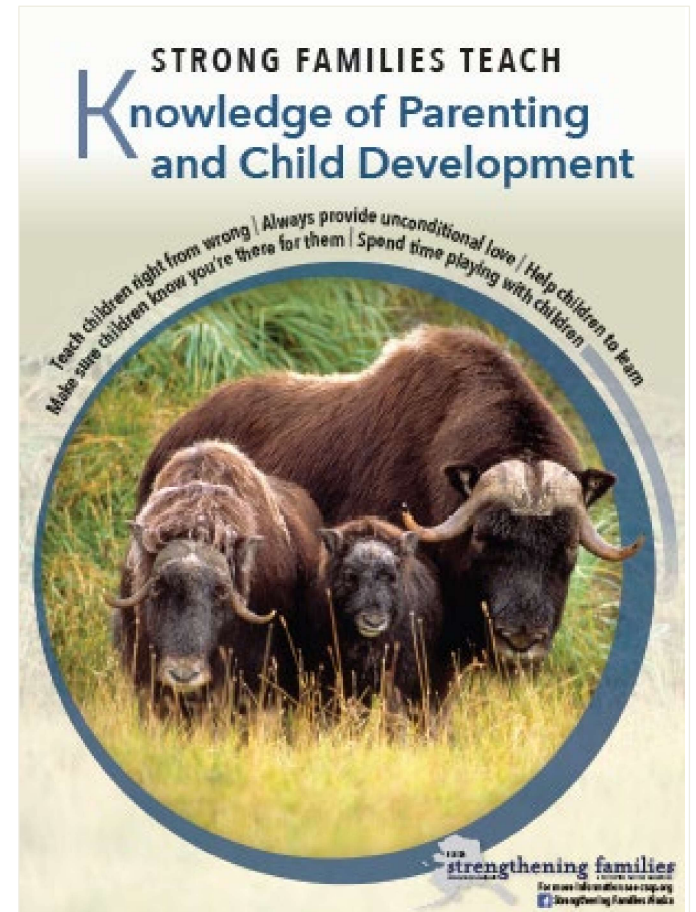
- Parents may be socially isolated (and may have good reasons for that)
- Parents may need support to develop positive relationships that will continue beyond program or system involvement
- Families may struggle to connect with other families when dealing with adversity, children displaying trauma reactions, and other challenges

# Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development

Learning about prenatal, infant, and child development, and using developmentally and contextually appropriate parenting practices.



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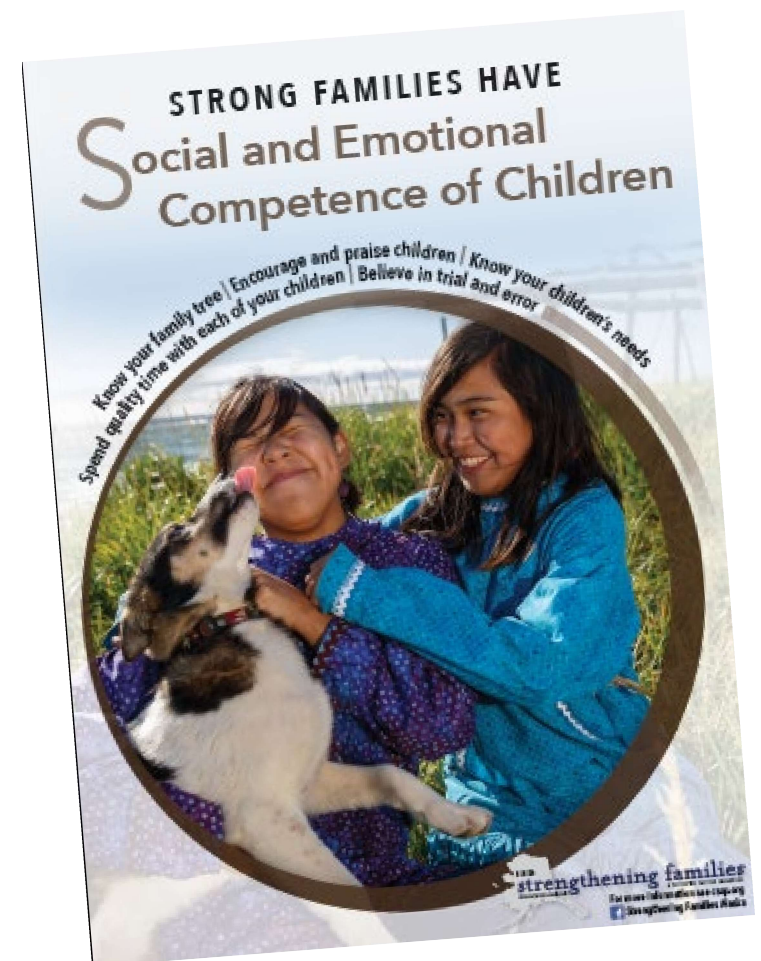


## Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development – When families are struggling

- Parents may be less likely to have positive parenting tools in their toolbox or no time/bandwidth to seek them out
- Children may be presenting with atypical development and not responding to a parenting style that worked in the past
- Providers may misread parent-child relationships and family dynamics due to cultural differences
- Systems may be placing multiple demands for things like parenting classes

# Social & Emotional Competence of Children

Providing environments and experiences—grounded in early relational health—that build positive social skills; enable children to regulate thoughts, emotions, and behaviors; and promote effective communication, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.





## Social & Emotional Competence – When families are struggling

- Stressors of poverty and discrimination can make it harder for parents to maintain routines for young children and build early relational health with their children
- Families may be struggling with the impact of trauma, loss, and separation – or living in fear of it
- Children may have experienced disruption to foundational relationships, care arrangements, etc.
- Systems and providers may label a dysregulated child as “bad” rather than seeking relational and mental health supports



# Concrete Support

Identifying, accessing, advocating for, and receiving high quality and equitable support including the basic necessities everyone deserves and specialized services to address specific needs.





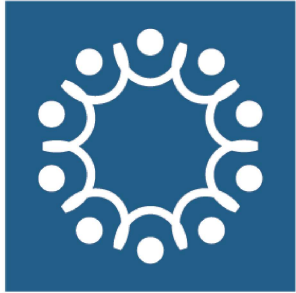


## Concrete Support – When families are struggling

- Families may be mistrustful of services and systems even when they need the support
- Barriers may keep families from accessing services and supports – e.g., fear of law enforcement, lack of transportation
- Caregivers may need formal or informal respite care arrangements that can accommodate special needs
- Child needs or behaviors may disrupt daily routines and have negative impacts on ability to work, get child care, etc.
- The advocacy required to get needs met can be exhausting



- Which protective factor(s) do you focus on most in your work?
- Which protective factor do you think families need the most support with right now?



# Center for the Study of Social Policy

Ideas into Action



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