STRENGTHENING FAMILIES SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

About the Self-Assessment

The Program Self-Assessment helps programs determine how well they are implementing strategies to strengthen families. The Self-Assessment is based on findings from a national study that identified exemplary programs across the country. It allows all programs to compare their practices with those of the exemplary programs and identify areas for improvement. The Self-Assessment outlines how the protective factors can be supported through small but significant changes in program practice. It is written for programs committed to working with and supporting the families they serve. Versions of the Self-Assessment are available for:

- Center-based early care and education programs or preschools
- Home visiting programs
- Community-based programs such as family resource centers
- Family intervention programs such as mental health agencies
- Home-based early care and education programs

While there is significant overlap across these different versions, each also contains unique strategies specific to each setting. The Program Self-Assessment materials in this document are applicable to center-based early care and education programs or preschools. The concrete actions described in the self-assessment can be carried out in a variety of settings such as full or half-day child care centers, after school programs, Head Start or public preschools. The strategies described can be implemented without creating new staff positions, making significant changes to existing facilities or raising additional financial resources.

Organization

The Self-Assessment outlines practices used by exemplary programs to support families and is organized around seven program strategies that support the six Strengthening Families protective factors:

- **Parental Resilience:** Families bounce back.
  "Managing stress and getting through it when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma"
  Being a parent can be a very rewarding and joyful experience. All parents experience stress from time-to-time. Thus, parental resilience is a process that all parents need in order to effectively manage stressful situations and help ensure they and their families are on a trajectory of healthy, positive outcomes. Parental resilience is the process of calling forth one's inner strength to proactively manage stress, meet personal/family challenges and be able to function well. Program strategies for promoting parental resilience:
  - Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support
  - Respond to Family Crisis
  - Value and Support Parents

- **Social Connections:** Families have friends they can count on.
"Having positive relationships that provide emotional, informational and spiritual support"
When parents have a sense of connectedness they have people who care about them as individuals and as parents. They feel secure and confident that they have others with whom they can share the joy, pain and uncertainties that come with the parenting role. They seek timely assistance from people they have learned to count on and they feel empowered to "give back" through satisfying, mutually beneficial relationships. Several research studies have demonstrated that high levels of emotional, informational, instrumental or spiritual support is associated with positive parental mood; positive perceptions of and responsiveness to one's children; parental satisfaction, well-being and sense of competence; and lower levels of anger, anxiety and depression. Constructive and supportive social connections help buffer parents from stressors and support nurturing parenting behaviors that promote secure attachments in young children.
Program strategies for nurturing social connections:
  - Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support

- **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** Families learn how their children grow and develop.
 "Understanding child development and parenting strategies that advance physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development"
No parent knows everything about children or is a "perfect parent." An understanding of parenting strategies and child development helps parents understand what to expect and how to provide what children need during each developmental phase. All parents can benefit from increasing their knowledge and understanding of child development. Developing brains need proper nutrition, regularly scheduled periods of sleep, physical activity and a variety of stimulating experiences. What parents do and how they treat children is often a reflection of the way they were parented. Acquiring new knowledge about parenting and child development enables parents to critically evaluate the impact of their current parenting practices, and to consider that there may be more effective ways of guiding and responding to their children.
Program strategies for nurturing knowledge of parenting and child development:
  - Strengthen Parenting

- **Concrete Support in Times of Need:** Families get assistance to meet basic needs.
"Access to resources that address a family's basic needs and minimize stress caused by challenges"
When parents are faced with very trying conditions such as losing a job, substance abuse, not being able to feed their family or trauma, they need access to concrete support to address their needs and help to minimize the stress. Assisting parents to identify, find, and receive concrete support in times of need helps to ensure the basic necessities are met. A strengths-based approach helps parents feel valued because they are acknowledged as knowledgeable and competent. They develop a sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy because they have opportunities to build their skills, experience success and provide help to others. Thus, access to concrete support in times of need must be accompanied by a quality of service coordination and delivery that is designed to preserve parents' dignity and to promote their and their family's healthy development, resilience and ability to advocate for needed services and resources.
Program strategies for providing concrete support in times of need:
  - Link Families to Services

- **Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** Families teach children how to have healthy relationships.
  "Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to recognize, communicate, and regulate their emotions"
  Early childhood is a period of both great opportunity and vulnerability. Early childhood experiences set the stage for later health, wellbeing and learning. In the past, most of the focus was on building young children's academic skills in an effort to ensure they were prepared for school. However, in recent years a growing body of research has demonstrated the strong link between young children's social-emotional competence and their cognitive development, language skills, mental health and school success. These dimensions of social-emotional competence do not evolve naturally. Numerous research studies show that a relationship with a consistent, caring and attuned adult who actively promotes the development of these dimensions is essential for healthy social-emotional outcomes in young children.
  Program strategies for nurturing children's social and emotional competence:
  - Facilitate Children's Social and Emotional Competence
  - Respond to Family Crisis

- **Nurturing and Attachment:** Families ensure children feel loved and safe.
  "A child's early experience of being nurtured and developing a bond with a caring adult"
  Juggling the demands of work, home and other responsibilities leaves many parents feeling like they do not have nearly enough time for their children. But even small acts of kindness, protection, and caring – a hug, a smile, or loving words make a huge difference to children.
  Infant brains develop best when a few stable caregivers work to understand and meet the infant's need for love, affection, and stimulation. A lack of contact or interaction with a caregiver can change the infant's body chemistry, resulting in a reduction in the growth hormones essential for brain and heart development. Furthermore, children who lack early emotional attachments will have a difficult time relating to peers. Parents nurture their older children by making time to listen to them, being involved and interested in the child's school and other activities, staying aware of the child or teen's interests and friends, and being willing to advocate for the child when necessary.
  Program strategies for supporting nurturing and attachment:
  - Facilitate Children's Social and Emotional Competence
  - Value and Support Parents

Completing the Self-Assessment

While the Self-Assessment forms may appear long at first glance, most sections have fewer than ten items. To make the process easier, the forms address specific practices; thus, multiple practices examples often appear under a single strategy. While the time it takes to complete the Self-Assessment will vary from program to program and from form to form, on average, it can be completed in approximately 30 minutes.

Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) strongly recommends that programs create a Self-Assessment team that represents a number of different perspectives at your program, including: administrative staff and/or program director, direct service staff and families who participate in the program (or whose children participate in the program)

Including a diverse group of participants in the Self-Assessment evaluation process allows programs to benefit from a large variety of viewpoints and perspectives. Once a team has been identified, the process begins by following the steps outlined below.

First, each member of the team should fill out the Self-Assessment forms individually. Though it is recommended that all sections of the assessment be completed, you may decide to start by completing only two or three of the strategies that relate to the specific protective factor/s that may be more of a priority for your organization.

Next, the team should convene to share and compare assessments. Teams should use this time to discuss rating results that differ among various team members, giving each person an opportunity to describe why they rated the practice the way they did and—if appropriate—to provide an example. Once everyone has had a chance to speak, all team members should be given an opportunity to re-rate the practice. It is not necessary for the entire team to come to consensus on every practice, but it is important that all team members come to understand each other's perspectives and that a final decision is made on how to rate the item based on broad input.

It is recommended that you capture the consensus of the group on a final self-assessment document.

Creating an Action Plan

Once all team members have re-rated the practices, the team should identify areas where the program scored highly. Next, the team should create a sustainability plan to keep these areas strong. In developing a sustainability plan for each successful area, teams should be sure to specify: key reasons for success in the area, what needs to be done to ensure continued strength in the area and who will be responsible for maintaining successful outcomes in the area

Next, the team should highlight practice areas that a majority of the team rated poorly. While we encourage programs to work on each of these areas eventually, the team can begin by deciding whether each poorly rated practice should be addressed (1) immediately, (2) over time, or (3) not at all. In categorizing practices to address it is also important to think about practices that align with your organizations' priorities and also practices where small changes can lead to quick success. By beginning with these practices you will build momentum and ensure better follow though.

When a majority of team members identify items that should be addressed immediately, teams should brainstorm plans and activities to improve associated area outcomes. It is important that you encourage creativity, a willingness to test new ideas and include families in the planning and evaluation process. Teams should be sure to specify:
- The expected results
- All required resources (including staff hour costs)
- A timeline for achieving the desired results
- Who is responsible for each action step
- Check-in points for monitoring implementation progress

Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment
Strategy 1: facilitate friendships and mutual support
Protective factor: social connections and parental resilience

Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support: Social Connections and Parental Resilience	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
1 A comfortable space is available for families to meet informally							
2 The program helps parents set up formal and informal support mechanisms, such as phone trees, car pools, babysitting co-ops, play groups, and other age-appropriate activities							
3 The program connects families with similar interests, children's ages, and circumstances (such as those with twins, parents of infants, parents with special-needs children, or those who speak the same language)							
4 The program provides opportunities for families to socialize and foster a sense of community through:							
a) Periodic events like coffee breaks and breakfasts							
b) Celebrations, graduations, and holidays							
c) Field trips and activities							
d) Events celebrating cultural customs, potlucks, and other opportunities for parents to share and learn about each other's home lives and cultural backgrounds							
e) Affordable family activities							
f) Special programs for dads, grandparents, teen moms, and other caregivers							

Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support: Social Connections and Parental Resilience	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
5 The program encourages and provides support for parent- organized social/educational events and activities, such as:							
a) Making information available on outside activities for parents to attend together—for example, gathering at playgrounds, fun fairs, or libraries							
b) Providing supports such as space, childcare, food, or other resources so that parents can participate in activities.							
6 The program offers opportunities for parents to talk with each other about:							
a) Typical challenges of parenting							
b) Stages of child development							
c) Expectations and norms about child rearing							
d) Sibling rivalry							
e) Balancing work and family							
f) Parenting practices in and across cultural and ethnic groups							
7 Program staff reach out to isolated families by:							
a) Calling, sending notes, or making home visits							
b) Inviting them to social activities							
c) Offering support with transportation, childcare, or other barriers to participation in social activities							
d) Making special efforts to connect them with other families							
e) Connecting them with resources, such as mental health consultation, that can help them explore difficulties with forming social connections							
8 The program models positive social skills and community building by:							
a) Welcoming all families							
b) Inviting all children and families to parties or social events							
c) Helping to resolve issues among families							
d) Promoting understanding of different cultures and backgrounds							

Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment
Strategy 2: Strengthen Parenting
Protective Factors: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Strengthen Parenting: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
1 Information on parenting is available through:							
a) Books and videos in a resource library							
b) Parenting classes and discussion groups							
c) Regular postings on bulletin boards in public spaces							
d) Take-home materials distributed regularly to parents							
e) Opportunities for parents with similar concerns to come together and share							
f) Specific information on such issues as Shaken Baby Syndrome, SIDS, scalding, toilet training, routine preventative health care, nutrition, and sleep patterns							
2 Parenting information is available in the language spoken by families							
3 Staff are knowledgeable about:							
a) The parenting practices of different cultural and ethnic groups							
b) The parenting styles of both mothers and fathers and the strengths of each							
c) Parent-child relationships, attachment, and bonding							
d) Promoting positive relationships between children living in the same household							
4 Opportunities are created for parents to explore:							
a) Cultural/ethnic expectations and practices about parenting							
b) How they were parented							
c) New parenting practices							
d) Their relationship with their child(ren)							

Strengthen Parenting: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
5 Staff share parenting tips and discuss parenting issues with parents when:							
a) Families are arriving and departing							
b) Staff are meeting one-on-one with parents							
c) A parent appears to be frustrated or stressed and in need of support							
d) A parent appears to be having difficulty relating to or communicating with their child(ren)							
e) Child behavior or development issues arise							
6 The program offers or connects families to resources to strengthen relationships between adults, e.g., healthy marriage, communication skills for couples, parents and grandparents, co-parenting, etc.							
7 Parents are invited to visit and observe their children participating in programming, where appropriate, and talk with staff about their observations and questions							
8 Staff reinforce parental authority by:							
a) Learning about the parent's expectations and limits for their child							
b) Supporting parents' directions and /or decisions about their child							
c) Talking with parents in a respectful manner about how best to handle differences in expectations regarding children's behavior							
d) Being careful not to contradict a parent in front of his or her child or other children							
9 Staff reinforce positive parenting by:							
a) Noticing when parents are attuned to their children's needs or communicating effectively with their children							
b) Telling parents something positive about what their child has done each day							

Strengthen Parenting: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
10 Staff guide parents' observations of their children to help them recognize:							
a) Their child's unique temperament, personality, communication styles, and cues							
b) Their children's growth and development patterns							
c) Positive social skills and developmentally appropriate emotional behavior in their children							
d) Their child's independence and abilities							
e) Activities they can use at home							
11 Information is provided on regular developmental challenges, such as bed wetting, potty training, appropriate discipline, eating, sleeping, and aggression							
12 Family activities provide opportunities to strengthen bonds between parents and their children—for example, listening to each other, playing together, and cooperative games, such as "feeling charades"							
13 Physical discipline (spanking or hitting) is not allowed in the program by staff or parents							
14 When staff talk with parents about discipline, they:							
a) Explain why physical discipline is not allowed							
b) Explain why the program uses the forms of discipline it does							
c) Provide information on age- appropriate discipline and reasonable expectations							
d) Offer ideas for alternate forms of discipline and how to recognize and reinforce desired/appropriate behavior							
e) Encourage parents to discuss discipline challenges they may have at home							

Strengthen Parenting: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
15 When staff are concerned about parenting techniques or behavior, they:							
a) Proactively and respectfully reach out to parents and share their concerns about the children or about the parents' parenting practices							
b) Acknowledge young children's frustrating behavior and recognize parents' efforts							
c) Connect parents to resources and supports that may help to address the parenting issues							
d) Connect parents to other parents who can share/model positive parenting approaches							
16 For parents of children with special needs, staff:							
a) Connect parents with parenting materials and websites, support groups and play groups, and community resources specific to their children's special needs							
b) Check regularly with parents about parenting issues							
c) Are sensitive to parents' frustration, protectiveness, guilt, loss, and other related feelings, and acknowledge challenges							
d) Support parents in understanding appropriate developmental expectations for their special-needs children							
e) Check in with parents about the impact their children's special needs are having on family dynamics and parental stress							
f) Are especially supportive at the time that special needs are initially identified							
g) Provide speakers/resources for parents on topics of interest/concern							
h) Ensure that parent-child activities are appropriate for families with children with special needs							

Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment
Strategy 3: Respond To Family Crises
Protective Factors: Parental Resilience and Social and Emotional
Competence of Children

Strengthen Parenting: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
1 Staff develop personal relationships with parents by taking time to get to know them individually—listening and learning about their interests, families, current activities, and							
hopes and expectations for their children							
2 The message that parents can turn to staff in the event of a crisis is conveyed:							
a) Informally, in regular interactions that staff have							
with parents—by listening, showing concern, and sharing their own personal challenges or desires							
b) Formally through materials provided to participating families							
3 The program provides parents with information on the role of all staff members and which staff members can help them with particular issues							
4 Staff respond to family crises immediately by:							
a) Ensuring that a staff person is available at all times to help families needing crisis support							
b) Making space available for staff to meet with parents privately							
c) Ensuring that parents can talk with staff members with whom they are the most comfortable							
5 Resources are made available to families in crisis, such as money from a small emergency fund, access to meals, or transportation							

Strengthen Parenting: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
6 The program maintains up-to-date information about services in the communities, such as:							
a) Food pantries							
b) Domestic violence services							
c) Shelters							
d) Respite care for children							
e) Alcohol and substance abuse services							
f) Mental health services							
g) Economic supports							
h) Legal assistance							
7 Staff know how to respond appropriately to family crises. Staff receive training on:							
a) Maintaining confidentiality							
b) Resolving conflicts							
c) Talking to families about difficult issues							
d) Recognizing such issues as domestic violence, depression, developmental delays, mental illness, chronic health problems, substance abuse, and other signs of imminent crisis							
e) Helping families make immediate and long-term plans							
f) Understanding the impact of family crises and/or loss on all family members—especially children—and how to respond appropriately							
g) Talking to parents about helping children in times of crisis							

Strengthen Parenting: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
8 If appropriate, staff mobilize other parents in the program to help out families in crisis							
9 If parents bring up issues staff feel are beyond their ability, staff can refer them to a:							
a) Supervisor							
b) Specialist with knowledge in the area							
c) Cross-disciplinary staff team							
d) Community resource							
10 Staff proactively respond to signs of parent or family distress by:							
a) Expressing their concern and offering help							
b) Offering to connect families to needed resources							
c) Making themselves available to parents if they need to talk							
d) Sharing information about a parent help-line or warm-line							
e) Being sensitive and responsive to the impact of family stress on children							
11 Staff receive support when working with families under stress through:							
a) Acknowledgement of their efforts							
b) Supported opportunities to process their own emotional reactions							
c) Access to a mental health consultant							
d) Time off if needed							

Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment
Strategy 4: Link Families to Services and Opportunities
Protective Factor: Concrete Support in Times of Need

Link Families to Services and Opportunities: Concrete Support in Times of Need	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
1 The program develops family plans with parents that:							
a) Identify their interests, skills, needs, and goals for themselves and their children							
b) Identify services and opportunities within the program that may help them achieve their goals and use their skills and talents							
c) Identify other community resources and opportunities that may help them achieve their goals, continue their learning, and/or provide other avenues for involvement							
d) Are regularly revised and updated in conjunction with families							
e) Other:							
2 Staff and parents have access to up-to-date information about services that are available in the community that includes hours of business, fees, location, eligibility, language capacity, etc.							
3 When staff make referrals to outside services, they:							
a) Brainstorm with families about what resources would be helpful							
b) Help parents address barriers to utilizing services, such							
as lack of transportation or childcare, language difficulties, or fees							
c) Help them fill out paperwork that might help them access these services, for example, insurance and eligibility forms							
d) Follow up with families to see if they used the referral and ensure that they were satisfied with the services they received							
e) Try to make a personal connection between families and service providers							
f) Identify services and opportunities within the program that may help them achieve their goals and use their skills and talents							

Link Families to Services and Opportunities: Concrete Support in Times of Need	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
4 The program actively builds collaborative links with other service providers in order to:							
a) Bring other services on site when possible							
b) Ease the referral process by ensuring the workers in different programs work together							
c) Share information with parents about resources							
d) Identify and fill gaps							
5 The program encourages parents to share information about community resources for families—such as toy exchanges, resale shops, play lots, family activities, and more formal services							
6 The program connects parents to opportunities that promote:							
a) Their continued growth and development							
b) Family enrichment, i.e., reading hours at the library, parent-child book groups, and cultural heritage events							
c) Healthy adult relationships and marriage							
d) Fathers' involvement with their children							
e) Enrichment activities for children							
7 The program provides information and guidance on:							
a) Transition to school for children							
b) Parents' and children's educational rights and responsibilities							
c) The importance of parents staying involved with their children's education and school							

Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment
Strategy 5: Facilitate Children's Social and Emotional Development
Protective Factors: Social and Emotional Competence of Children and Nurturing and Attachment

Facilitate Children's Social and Emotional Development: Social and Emotional Competence of Children and Nurturing and Attachment	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
1 The program supports children's social and emotional development with intentional practices that:							
a) Are culturally sensitive to the families it serves							
b) Encourage children to express their feelings							
c) Encourage sharing, taking turns, and cooperative play							
2 Staff receive training on:							
a) Fostering children's social and emotional development							
b) Recognizing developmental delays							
c) Recognizing behavioral / emotional problems							
d) The impact of loss or trauma on behavior							
e) Sensory awareness and integration							
3 The program introduces parents to social and emotional development by:							
a) Informing parents of the importance of supporting children's healthy social and emotional development— and its connection to success in school							
b) Helping parents understand age-appropriate social and emotional skills and behaviors							
c) Providing opportunities to discuss social and emotional issues with parents within a cultural context							
d) Encouraging parents to be aware of their children's social and emotional development							
e) Offering parents ideas on how to foster a child's social and emotional learning at home							
f) Teaching about children's social and emotional development in parenting classes and informal discussions							

Facilitate Children's Social and Emotional Development: Social and Emotional Competence of Children and Nurturing and Attachment	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
4 Parents have opportunities to observe their children interacting with other children and staff in the program							
5 Staff make sure that parents understand how their child(ren)'s positive relationships with other adults positively impact their own relationship with their child(ren)							
6 Staff coach parents about how to interact effectively with their children (listening; appreciating ideas, efforts, and feelings; creating a non-threatening environment)							
7 Staff encourage children to express their feelings through words, artwork, and expressive play							
8 Staff model behavior toward children that encourages social and emotional expressiveness							
9 Staff understand and respect the relationships and attachments that children form in the program by:							
a) Providing children the opportunity to say goodbye when they are leaving the program or when staff changes occur							
b) Helping children process class and / or staffing changes							
c) Communicating any staff changes to parents							
d) Intentionally helping children enter into new settings							
10 If staff are concerned about a child's social and emotional development, they:							
a) Discuss concerns with the child's parent(s)							
b) Connect the family to resources that can support the child's social and emotional development (such as play therapy, mental health services, or parenting classes)							
c) Help the parent(s) develop strategies for addressing the issue at home							
11 Staff have access to a mental health consultant to help them:							
a) Develop positive approaches for individual children							
b) Determine what additional resources and or training they may need							
c) Talk with parents about their child(ren)'s development, needs, or challenges							

Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment
Strategy 6: Recognize and Respond to Early Warning Signs of
Child Abuse or Neglect
Protective Factors: Concrete Support in Times of Need and
Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Recognize and Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse/Neglect: Concrete Supports in Times of Need and Social Emotional Competence	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
1 When parents enter the program they are informed of:							
a) Staff's status as mandatory reporters							
b) What constitutes abuse and neglect within the state							
c) The program's protocols regarding child abuse and neglect							
2 All staff are trained to recognize early signs of child abuse and neglect							
3 Staff monitor the following signs that a family may be under stress, including:							
a) Physical signs (such as bruises), acting out, distress, challenging behavior, fearful behavior, inappropriate language/behavior (such as sexual acting out), or other child symptoms							
b) Unusual parental behavior at arrival or departure times							
c) Repeated unexplained absences							
d) Repeated tardiness, late pick-ups, or missed appointments							
e) Missed payments							
f) Divorce, job loss, or other family crises							
g) Parents' acknowledgement of stress or problems							
4 When a family is experiencing extreme difficulties but there is no sign of imminent harm to the child or other family members:							
a) Staff work with the family to discuss concerns and appropriate actions							
b) At least one staff member reaches out to the family to address the issues causing concern							
c) Staff attempt to connect the family to resources that can help address the issue, including such intensive services as respite care, shelters, or emergency crisis services							
d) Staff continue to support the family and monitor the situation daily until the situation is resolved							

Recognize and Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse/Neglect: Concrete Supports in Times of Need and Social Emotional Competence	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
5 All staff are trained on the impact of loss and trauma on children and how to respond appropriately							
6 All staff are trained to follow the program's protocols for reporting child abuse and neglect							
7 Staff are oriented to the state's child welfare reporting guidelines and understand how cases are generally handled once a report is made							
8 When staff must file a child welfare report, they:							
a) Coordinate with investigative authorities to ensure that actions and interactions with the family support and do not hinder the investigation							
b) Strive to be calm, caring and supportive during the reporting process							
c) Provide fair and accurate information on the concerns that led to the child welfare report, as well as family strengths							
d) To the best of their ability, answer questions that the family may have regarding the reporting process and how the child protective services system typically responds							
e) Explain their status as mandated reporters and the goal of keeping children safe							
f) Offer to support families by answering questions, connecting them to resources they may need, and providing a listening ear and friendly advice							
9 Program staff help families find suitable respite care and/or emergency crisis services							
10 If a child is placed in custody, staff:							
a) Maintain contact with the parent							
b) Advocate for the family with the child protective services system, when possible							
c) Help the parent(s) connect with resources to help reunite them with their child							
11 The program helps families navigate the child welfare system by:							
a) Helping them get the help they need							
b) Helping maintain stability for children							
c) Collaborating with child welfare caseworkers							

Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment
Strategy 7: Value and Support Parents
Protective Factors: Parental Resilience and Nurturing and
Attachment

Value and Support Parents: Parental Resilience and Nurturing and Attachment	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
1 The program encourages parents to be active in making decisions about their children's education							
2 Staff recognize and affirm the central role of parents in their child's life							
3 Staff get to know parents individually and regularly inquire about what is happening in their lives							
4 Staff get to know all family members by name							
5 Parents have opportunities to volunteer and contribute to the program							
6 Parents have opportunities to share skills, talents, and cultural traditions with children and other parents							
7 Staff recognize and value parent contributions							
8 Staff are accepting and supportive of diverse family constellations, i.e. single parents, grandparents, foster parents, gay / lesbian couples, etc.							
9 Parents have regular opportunities to engage in activities in the center's physical space							
10 Parents have opportunities to participate in:							
a) Parent-only social activities							
b) Support groups							
c) Activities designed to relieve stress, such as spa days, date nights (parents' night out), or exercise classes							
d) Activities that promote healthy adult relationships, marriage, co-parenting							
e) Other:							

Value and Support Parents: Parental Resilience and Nurturing and Attachment	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
11 The program offers specific activities for fathers, mothers, and other family members							
12 The program welcomes fathers and other male family members by:							
a) Providing information specific to fathers/male family members in a special area such as a lounge, bulletin board, or bookshelf							
b) Displaying positive portrayals of men and children in books, posters, and program materials							
c) Providing a diaper changing deck in the men's room							
d) Providing activities or services that are man-to-man, father-to-father							
e) Using intake forms, applications, and surveys that are gender-neutral							
f) Establishing working partnerships with a wide range of community resources that provide services to fathers							
13 Staff show that they value fathers and are sensitive to their unique needs by:							
a) Sharing responsibility for inviting and engaging fathers in programs and activities							
b) Taking part in periodic training on understanding and appreciating fathers' needs and parenting styles							
c) Understanding the needs of individual fathers, such as navigating the child support system or having multiple children with different mothers in the same program							
d) Being sensitive to barriers that limit father involvement, such as a difficult relationship with the child's mother, lack of information, and non-custodial relationship with child							
e) When possible and within the bounds of custody agreements, responding to non-custodial fathers' desire to participate in their children's lives by including them in mailings and updates about a child's progress, inviting them to activities, and responding to requests for information							
f) Encouraging fathers and male family members to engage in							

Value and Support Parents: Parental Resilience and Nurturing and Attachment	5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Neither	2: Disagree	1: Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	Comments
14 Parents have opportunities to discuss how they were parented and how it affects the way they parent							
15 Parents are connected to resources that help them explore different ways of parenting, including:							
a) Parent education groups							
b) Counseling							
c) Support groups							
d) Mentors/coaches							
e) Sisterhoods/brotherhoods							
f) Faith-based activities							
g) Other							
16 Staff provide emotional support and encouragement to parents							
17 Staff do not blame parents for children's challenging behaviors							
18 Staff recognize parents' growth and efforts							
19 The program provides parents opportunities for:							
a) Personal growth—such as attending conferences or special events and collecting and sharing information of interest to other parents							
b) Leadership development							
c) Input into programmatic decisions							
d) Input into staff hiring and training							