

# Family Support NEWS BRIEF

A publication of

 CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



## Building on Strengths, Growing our Reach: Expanded Definitions of Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors

The [Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework](#), introduced by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) in 2003, defines five factors that, when robust in families, contribute to positive outcomes for and healthy development of children and a reduced likelihood of child maltreatment.<sup>1</sup> The approach emphasizes the importance of focusing on strengths and recognizing caregivers as the leaders of their families.

While initial research led CSSP to focus the framework on families with children from birth through age five, states, local communities, and programs have applied the Strengthening Families approach and found that protective factors are present and meaningful in families with children of all ages.

CSSP introduced the [Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Framework](#) in 2011 which posits that as children grow into adolescence, they become more active drivers of their own development and thrive when they build protective factors. The Youth Thrive framework is complementary to the Strengthening Families framework because it continues to acknowledge the importance of parents and caregivers in children's lives while also recognizing the growing autonomy of young people ages 9 through 26.<sup>2</sup> Considering both frameworks together can help programs create opportunities for all members of families to build protective and promotive factors.

Recently CSSP updated and expanded the definitions of the protective factors. A brief, [Expanding the Perspectives and Research Foundation for the Strengthening Families & Youth Thrive Frameworks](#), provides more information on this expanded work including research evidence that informs both approaches.

### What does this mean for family support organizations?

One key aspect of the enhancements to the frameworks is the refining of the definitions of the protective factors. The chart provides the original and updated definitions. While the original definitions mostly focus on what a protective factor looks like in an individual or family, the expanded definitions recognize community and societal level factors that impact the development and well-being of children and families.<sup>3</sup> This may prompt organizations to consider how they can influence community conditions that

either support or deter the building of protective factors. These expanded definitions may have impacts not only program practices, but also advocacy and community collaboration. Below are some questions that may prompt conversations with staff. [Let us know](#) how discussing these expanded definitions impacts your work!

### Conversation Questions to Explore

1. What do you notice about the updated definitions?
2. What conditions in your community support or deter families from building each protective factor?
3. How does or could your organization influence the community conditions identified?
4. How could the organization’s practices with families benefit from this expanded view of the protective factors?

### Protective Factors Definitions

Protective Factor	Original Definition <sup>4</sup>	Updated Definition <sup>5</sup>
<b>Parental Resilience</b>	Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges, adversity and trauma.	Managing stress and functioning well—facilitated by individual, relational, community, or societal factors—when faced with stressors, adversity, or trauma.
<b>Social Connections</b>	Positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental and spiritual support.	Healthy, meaningful, trusting, and sustained relationships with people, institutions, communities, or a higher power that promotes a sense of connectedness, belonging, and mattering.
<b>Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development</b>	Understanding child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development.	Learning about prenatal, infant, and child development, and using developmentally and contextually appropriate parenting practices.
<b>Concrete Support</b>	Access to concrete support and services that address a family’s needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.	Identifying, accessing, advocating for, and receiving high quality and equitable support, including the basic necessities everyone deserves and specialized services to address specific needs.
<b>Social and Emotional Competence of Children</b>	Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize, and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.	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.

## Sources

- 1 Harper Browne, C. (2014). The Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors Framework: Branching out and reaching deeper. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. Retrieved 10/7/2024: <https://cssp.org/resource/the-strengthening-families-approach-and-protective-factors-framework-branching-out-and-reaching-deeper/>
- 2 CSSP (n.d.) Strengthening Families Curriculum: Youth Thrive—A Protective Factors Approach for Older Youth, Retrieved 10/10/2024: <https://cssp.org/resource/youththrive/>
- 3 Harper Browne, C. (2024, January). Expanding the Perspectives and Research Foundation for the Strengthening Families & Youth Thrive Frameworks. Center for the Study of Social Policy. Retrieved 10/7/2024: <https://cssp.org/resource/expanding-the-perspectives-and-research-foundation-for-the-strengthening-families-youth-thrive-frameworks/>
- 4 Original definitions from: CSSP (n.d.) About Strengthening Families and the Protective Factors Framework, Retrieved 10/7/2024: <https://cssp.org/resource/about-strengthening-families-and-the-protective-factors-framework/>
- 5 Expanded definitions from: Harper Browne, C. (2024, January). Expanding the Perspectives and Research Foundation for the Strengthening Families & Youth Thrive Frameworks. Center for the Study of Social Policy. Retrieved 10/7/2024: <https://cssp.org/resource/expanding-the-perspectives-and-research-foundation-for-the-strengthening-families-youth-thrive-frameworks/>



## Family Support Webinar

### Nurturing Emotional Growth: Trauma-informed Approaches to Social and Emotional Competence for Adults and Children

**Wednesday, December 4 | 10:00 – 11:00 AM ET**

Explore the foundations of social and emotional competence in adults and children from a trauma-informed perspective. This workshop will incorporate creative art and music activities to enhance emotional expression and regulation, providing practical tools for use at home and in educational settings. We will also focus on parent involvement, recognizing that strong adult-child relationships are key to social and emotional development.

**Stephanie Colvin-Roy**, Training and Organizational Development Associate, Center for the Promotion of Social and Emotional Learning (CPSEL)

[Register for Nurturing Emotional Growth webinar](#)

This webinar is hosted by Center for Schools and Communities with support from Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL).

There is no cost to participate.

[View listing of Family Support recorded webinars.](#)

## Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers Courses

**December 2-13, 2024**

Start Time: 8:00 AM CST

Instructors: Terry Wertman, Bethany Smith

[Register for FMI December](#)

[Register for FND December](#)



## Family Support Team

Family Support at Center for Schools and Communities provides training and technical assistance to Parents as Teachers providers, Children's Trust Fund grantees, and the Strengthening Families Leadership Team.

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# Safe Kids Corner

## Burns and Scalds

Since young children are still developing, they have thinner skin than adults, which can result in more serious injuries from a burn or scald. One of the ways young, curious kids learn about their surroundings is through their sense of touch. Sometimes their exploration can lead them to reach out and touch hot objects, resulting in an injury. Here are a few simple steps to keep your child safe from potential burns and scalds in your home.

### The Hard Facts About Burns and Scalds

Fire/burn related injuries are among the leading 10 causes of unintentional injury in children ages 0 to 5, with children 2 and younger at greatest risk.

Every day, 300 children ages birth to 19 are treated in emergency departments for burn-related injuries.

### Top Tips Preventing Burns and Scalds

**Create a kid-free zone.** Teach younger children to stay at least 3 feet away from your cooking space. If you need to watch babies while cooking, place them in a highchair outside of the kid-free zone where you can see them.

**Keep hot objects out of children's reach.** Cook on the back burners of the stove and turn pot handles away from the edge. Keep hot foods and drinks away from the edge of your counters and tables.

**Teach older children how to cook safely.** Make sure they don't leave the kitchen while cooking and use oven mitts or potholders to carry hot pots and pans.

**Check bathwater temperature.** Before placing your child in the bath, check the water temperature on the inside of your wrist. The water should feel warm to the touch, not hot.

**Watch children around fireplaces.** When a gas fireplace is turned on, the glass is extremely hot and can take more than an hour to cool down after it is turned off. Keep children away from the fireplace to prevent burns from the hot glass.

### Learn More About Preventing Burns and Scalds

Learn more about [preventing burns and scalds](#) and [fire safety](#). Here's more information about keeping kids [safe around fireworks](#) and [button batteries](#).

[Source: Safe Kids Worldwide](#)