

Partnerships and Protective Factors

Strong parent partnerships elevate the five protective factors that are part of the Strengthening Families approach to support family wellbeing and prevent child abuse and neglect. When birth parents and foster parents/kinship caregivers are working together effectively, families have more resources to be strong and resilient, to provide children with the love and connection they need for healthy

development and to build networks of people who help them when times are tough. Seeing their parents and foster parents model using the protective factors in their own lives can help children and youth learn to build on their own strengths and draw on their own resilience in challenging times as they move into adulthood.

Parental Resilience

The ability to recover from difficult life experiences, and often to be strengthened by and even transformed by those experiences.

Foster parents and birth parents can offer each other encouragement and support and also help each other see their own strengths related to resilience. For example, each can point out times they have seen the other show resilience in difficult situations.

Social Connections

The ability and opportunity to develop positive relationships that lessen stress and isolation and help to build a supportive network.

Foster parents and birth parents can help each other think about any existing positive social connections they have and how they can build additional connections. A strong relationship between the birth parent and the foster parent can become an important social connection for both of them. They can strengthen their social connection through sharing medical and service provider appointments, inviting each other to celebrations, family events, attending trainings together, as well as attending co-parent support groups, Parent Cafés, or sharing a cup of coffee or a walk in the park as friends.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

The ability to exercise effective parenting strategies to guide and know what to expect as children develop in multiple domains (physical, cognitive, language and social and emotional).

Both foster parents and birth parents can gain knowledge from formal classes, informal conversations with family members and friends and written or web-based materials. Foster parents and birth parents can share their parenting knowledge and experiences with each other.

Concrete Support in Times of Need

Access to supports and services that reduces stress and helps to make families stronger.

There are times when all families may need support to reduce stresses. Foster parents and birth parents can share and learn from each other about various resources for basic needs, education and supplies that they know about in the community. They can each share any times that they needed help meeting their own basic needs. It is important that any parent understand that there is no need for shame or blame in reaching out for help. In fact, it is a sign of commitment to their children when parents reach out for help when needed.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions and establish and maintain relationships.

Birth parent and foster parents both have important roles in helping to foster the healthy social and emotional development of the children in their care. When both can practice supportive co-parenting, children can gain feelings of safety and trust and they can better grow and thrive. Birth parents and foster parents can share ideas for discipline and regulation that will provide consistency for the children in their care.

For more information check out the Children's Trust Fund Alliance's free of charge, online training on the protective factors framework at ctfalliance.org/protective-factors