

# strengthening families

## I L L I N O I S

### T R A I N I N G   S E S S I O N S

#### FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD AND CHILD WELFARE STAFF

Is your center Strengthening Families? Every early childhood center wants to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. The national Strengthening Families Initiative is helping centers strengthen protective factors in families—and now, SFI and the Midwest Learning Center for Family Support can help your center deepen its practice with state-of-the-art, pilot-tested training. These training sessions use a variety of teaching methods to help you embed the initiative's ground-breaking strategies in your center immediately. To arrange for your fee-for-service training or to learn more, contact us using the information at right.

#### **1. Protective Factors**

*Half-day or full day*

Two years of groundbreaking research from the Center for the Study of Social Policy have revealed a set of protective factors that are shown to prevent child abuse and neglect. These factors guide the work of the Strengthening Families Through Early Care and Education Initiative. The factors are: (1) parental resilience, (2) social connections, (3) knowledge of parenting and child development, (4) concrete support in times of need, (5) children's social and emotional development, and (6) healthy parent-child relationships. This training introduces participants to the logic model supporting the protective factors and begins the process of understanding how these factors prevent child abuse and neglect. This training motivates, challenges, and supports participants in connecting the protective factors with their work and life

experiences. When combined with supervised implementation, this knowledge leads to practice enhancements at early care and education centers.

#### **2. Recognizing & Responding to Signs of Family Stress**

*Half-day*

Responding to signs of child abuse and neglect is crucial. Research now allows us to start earlier than ever to keep children safe and families strong. By recognizing and responding to early signs of stress, early childhood and child welfare staff can help families get the kind of support that helps prevent abuse and neglect. This training helps participants get in touch with their own stress, recognize early signs of family stress, and understand the connection between stress and inappropriate behaviors. Strategies to manage stress are also explored.

#### **3. Communicating with Families**

*Half-day*

Once we recognize that a family needs support, approaching the topic in a respectful way is essential to building a partnership with them. This interactive workshop helps participants understand their own communication style, covering active listening as well as filters and barriers to effective communication. Participants will explore valuable insights about communicating with parents, practice effective communication skills, and develop action plans for communicating effectively with the parents they work with. *cont. over*

#### **4. Developing Collaborative Relationships Between Child Welfare and Early Childhood Staff**

*Half-day*

Early childhood programs have many reasons for working with child welfare staff, whether as mandated reporters or because children in their centers are involved with the system. Although these collaborations can be challenging, they are crucial to keeping children safe and promoting their healthy development. SFI has developed effective strategies for staff from both environments to work together for the best interests of children and families. This training demystifies the child welfare system's policies, processes, and structure and provides information and direction for early childhood staff. It also helps early childhood center staff understand the expectations of child welfare staff and establish mutually beneficial practices and relationships.

#### **5. Understanding Trauma and Children Exposed to Violence**

*Full-day*

Children's exposure to violence can range from being abused or neglected to witnessing violence in the home, community, or media. This training helps those who work in early childhood and child welfare agencies recognize, mitigate, respond to, and prevent trauma and exposure to violence. It is based on training developed by Chicago Safe Start and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and was created by those agencies with the Midwest Learning Center for Family Support, the Illinois Department of Human Services, and the Strengthening Families Illinois Building Resiliency Workgroup.

**"This training gave us great ideas for strengthening our early childhood center."**

These sessions are provided by the Midwest Learning Center for Family Support, Family Focus, Inc., one of more than forty partners in Strengthening Families Illinois. For more information or to arrange training for your staff, please contact:

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