

Chapter 3: Using Protective Factors as a Framework for Your Community Partnership

Working Successfully With Community Partners

Everyone has something to contribute to a family-strengthening effort. All sectors of the community need to be aware of the importance of the protective factors and understand how everyone can play a role in building these factors to support families and children. Working with any one of the groups listed below can be a great way to engage and support more families. However, the more groups that you involve, the more people you will reach and the stronger your community partnership will be. When all members of the community work together as a whole, families feel supported and are better able to nurture and care for their children.

Embrace Diversity

Every community group has unique beliefs, interests, and approaches to supporting families and children. Partnering with community members of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, lifestyles, and values will require an organizational investment in addressing differences in positive and productive ways. Consider the following tips:

- Make your community group welcoming to all by making meeting times and locations flexible and accessible to all. Insist on diversity in leadership.
- Seek to understand the beliefs, values, interests, and concerns of each group with whom you wish to partner. What are their mission and goals, and how will a family-strengthening effort further those goals?
- Different cultures define the concept of “family” in very different ways. Learn about

how the different groups in your community define family, and respect the definition of each family, tribe, or ethnic group.

- Beginning a meeting or workshop with a demonstration of spirituality drawn from one of the cultural groups represented can prepare participants emotionally and mentally for the activities of the day as well as acknowledge the strength of that culture to the entire group.
- Programs that introduce traditional child-rearing practices from various cultures, such as certain Native American tribes or immigrant groups, may help young parents raise their children in a positive and culturally knowledgeable manner.
- Learn about the importance of cultural responsiveness and what it looks like in practice. Find resources on the FRIENDS website at <https://friendsnrc.org/activities-that-support-collaboration/cultural-responsiveness> and on the Child Welfare Information Gateway website at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse-populations/> or <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/cultural/>.

Suggestions for Community Events

Offer training or workshops about the protective factors to various groups. General talking points can be found in the Spread the Word section of the Prevention Month microsite (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/spread-the-word/>).

Be sure to customize your presentation to your audience. End by inviting participation on your community family-strengthening council. Audiences might include the following:

- Judges and other court personnel involved in making best-interests determinations for children
- Child care center staff or parents
- Employees of a large local business
- Parent-teacher organizations (e.g., PTAs), Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) groups, or other parent groups
- Congregations or interfaith groups
- Local physicians, perhaps through “grand rounds” at local hospitals

Sponsor community events that support families and include a broad representation of your family-strengthening partnerships. Examples include the following:

- **“Parents’ Day” focused on the protective factors.** Find tools and resources from a successful parent-led event in Alaska at http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Documents/families/documents/AK_ParentEventToolkit.pdf.
- **Town hall meeting.** Invite local legislators, parent leaders, and other community leaders to discuss issues affecting local families.
- **Health fair.** Bring together local clinics and providers to offer free screenings as well as social service organizations who can talk about low-income health insurance options.
- **Human services fair.** Invite partner organizations to present on topics that help parents meet their families’ needs, such as finding adequate medical care, safe and affordable child care, and substance use treatment.
- **Job fair.** Invite local businesses to attend and meet with prospective candidates as well as nonprofit organizations that can provide help with child care, interview clothing or tips, transportation, and other job-related needs.
- **Ethnic street fairs.** These events offer families a way to enjoy their cultural heritage in the company of others. Community organizations can provide prevention information and educational materials at booths and through family-friendly activities such as parent-child craft activities and puppet shows.

Resources for Working With Community Partners

Essentials for Childhood. As a complementary protective factors framework, CDC’s Essentials for Childhood provides a step-by-step approach that community partnerships can take to support families and prevent child maltreatment. <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/essentials/>.

FRIENDS Collaboration Toolkit. Collective Impact is a proven framework for tackling complex social problems. This toolkit offers descriptions of each of the 10 elements of Collective Impact, along with tools and resources. <https://friendsnrc.org/activities-that-support-collaboration/collaboration-toolkit>.

Building Community, Building Hope Film Series. These films from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Technical Assistance and Strategic Dissemination Center (CANTASD) show real-world collaborative solutions to supporting families under stress. Each comes with a discussion toolkit and supporting materials to foster conversations about what we as a society can—and should—do to ensure the safety and well-being of all children and families. <http://www.cantasd.org/bcbh/>.

Tips for Working With Specific Groups



The following are suggestions for ways your agency or organization can build strong families and supportive communities by working with specific groups.

Faith Communities

- Support the development of mentoring programs within congregations for children and families under stress.
- Train religious and lay leaders to recognize signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect, work with victims and their families, and make appropriate referrals.
- Encourage religious leaders to acknowledge publicly that child abuse is a major concern for the faith community and that they are dedicated to supporting families and protecting children.
- For more information about working with faith-based communities, see the Information Gateway website at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse-populations/faith-based/>.

Parents and Caregivers

- Host a community or parent café. For more information, visit <http://www.cssp.org/community/constituents-co-invested-in-change/resident-and-youth-engagement/community-and-parent-cafes>.
- Reach out to community parent councils or forums. Support the development of such councils where they do not currently exist.

- Cohost parent education and support group meetings, or offer to bring a meeting to their location.
- Create opportunities for parent volunteers to participate in community activities, such as safety initiatives, after-school programs, mentoring programs, food drives, and other events.
- Ask experienced parent leaders to present at workshops and events and to serve as mentors for families who are just joining your partnership. For more information on parent leadership, see the FRIENDS website at <https://friendsnrc.org/parent-leadership>.

Immigrant and Refugee Families

- Invite immigrants, refugees, and other new Americans to speak to your staff about cultural differences and concerns unique to immigrant families.
- Participate in task forces, collaborations, and partnerships with community-based agencies dedicated to addressing the needs of immigrant families in your community.
- Develop literature in different languages to meet the needs of all families in your community.
- For more information, visit the Office of Refugee Resettlement at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr>.

American Indian/Alaska Native Families

- Within tribal communities, mutual respect and humility are greatly valued. American Indians and Alaska Natives have rich traditions, and respecting those traditions and being open to tribal approaches will strengthen relationships. Be upfront about your level of experience working with American Indian/Alaska Native families or tribes, and be open to listening to what makes each family and tribe unique and special.
- Establish ongoing communication. Often, tribes and states communicate only in times of conflict or misunderstanding. Productive working relationships are hinged on the personal relationships of people and regular communication among those people.
- Understand that tribes are sovereign nations, which simply means that tribes have, by law, the right to self-governance. Identify avenues for negotiating common interests related to the welfare of children and an understanding of and appreciation for the different government structures.
- For more information, visit <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse-populations/americanindian/>.

Courts

- Create meaningful roles for parents and community stakeholders in the juvenile dependency court system to promote a better understanding of the challenges faced by those who come before the court.
- Set up formal referral systems to direct parents to legal service providers within the community.

- Create support groups among parents currently or previously involved with the court system.

Early Childhood Centers and Schools

- Offer to provide onsite services to children and families. This can be an important first step in building families' comfort with pursuing services.
- Offer to speak at a parent-teacher organization (PTA or PTO) meeting.
- Seek opportunities to sponsor joint events.

Business Leaders

- Recruit a high-profile business leader to serve in a leadership role for your community-based partnership. Encourage him or her to challenge fellow business leaders to contribute.
- Publicly recognize companies with family-friendly services and policies, such as onsite child care, paid sick leave, flexible scheduling, and telecommuting.
- Identify ways that employee volunteer programs could work to support safe and healthy families in the community.
- Ask local businesses to consider family-strengthening messages in their advertising, on menus, or on product packaging.

Military

- Invite family support personnel from local installations or the National Guard to share information about family support resources offered through military-specific programs and participate in community events and trainings. Locate family support personnel by

visiting MilitaryINSTALLATIONS at <http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/MOS/f?p=MI:ENTRY:0>.

- Include military families as a target audience for your marketing materials.
- Create opportunities for military parents to participate as volunteers, mentors, or leaders in community activities that focus on strengthening families. Adjust commitment requirements, as needed, to be sensitive to military personnel schedules and deployments.

Medical Community

- Develop parenting resources in cooperation with health-care providers. Physician organizations often have materials to help improve knowledge of parenting and child development. For an example, visit <http://brightfutures.aap.org>.
- Develop community resource guides for health-care providers who identify children and families with specific needs. Resources might include child care programs, after-school programs for children with disabilities, and others.
- Develop partnerships with local health-care provider organizations. For example, the American Academy of Pediatrics has local chapters throughout the United States. For more information, visit <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/chapters-and-districts/Pages/chapters-and-districts.aspx>.

Policymakers

- Write or call your local legislator and make him or her aware of the research demonstrating how the protective factors help prevent child abuse and neglect. Briefly

point out your community's current strengths and needs.

- Build long-term relationships with your legislator and his or her staff; keep them informed regularly of community issues affecting families.

Law Enforcement

- Explore the programs that your local law enforcement agency offers related to children, youth, and families. These might include diversion, mentoring, or early intervention, among others. Visit the International Association of Chiefs of Police Youth Focused Policing Resource Center website for more information at <http://www.iacpyouth.org/>.
- Seek to partner with school-based law enforcement personnel. These officers already have a close connection with youth and families and can offer a valuable perspective.
- Invite a law enforcement representative along when making protective factors presentations to parent groups, child care centers, and other family venues. Ask whether your local agency has a community relations or community outreach coordinator.
- Coordinate a community safety awareness campaign or activities.

Substance Use Treatment Agencies

- Ensure that all child-serving agencies in the community have an understanding of the disease of addiction and view relapse and recovery as long-term disease management issues. Visit the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare for more information at <https://www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov/>.

- Establish shared protocols across the community for screening, assessing, and referring families to substance use treatment. When needed, use “warm handoffs” to help families connect with treatment providers.
- Colocate substance use specialists in child welfare offices, dependency courts, and other family-serving agencies.
- Partner with family-centered treatment providers to treat families through a comprehensive strategy that addresses their multifaceted needs.

Mental Health Professionals

- Offer onsite mental health service teams or develop a resource list of potential behavioral/mental health agencies.
- Work with a partner mental health agency to identify functional screening and assessment tools and coordinate early intervention referrals, evaluations, and services for children.
- Coordinate efforts to offer ongoing training and deliver evidence-based interventions related to trauma and mental health challenges that are common among the children and youth in your community.
- Develop interagency communication protocols that respect confidentiality policies while sharing information that may affect the treatment of children, youth, and family members.
- Visit the Building Bridges Initiative for more information on partnerships and collaborations at <http://www.buildingbridges4youth.org/>.

Domestic Violence Advocates

- Colocate a domestic violence advocate onsite at family-serving agencies. Offer support groups and counseling for victims and children.
- Develop cross-system protocols and partnerships to ensure coordinated services and responses to families experiencing domestic violence.
- Host joint events such as workshops on teen dating violence, awareness or education campaigns, or food and clothing drives for victims and their families.
- For more information, visit the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence at <http://www.nrcdv.org/> or Futures Without Violence at <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/children-youth-teens/>.



Building Partnerships Through Media



Today, a wider-than-ever variety of media strategies is available to help your organization or community partnership spread the word about events, reach potential supporters, and build connections among stakeholders. Understanding the different channels and developing a thoughtful, comprehensive media strategy are important steps that can support the goal of preventing child maltreatment and enhancing child well-being in your community.

Traditional Versus Social Media

Media channels fall into two general categories. Traditional media are television, radio, and print. Traditional media strategies include the following:

- Press releases
- Letters to the editor
- Public service announcements
- Radio or television interviews

Social media are web-based tools that allow you to share messages and materials and to establish dialogue with stakeholders. Some of the most popular social media tools include the following:

- Websites
- Podcasts
- Blogs and microblogs (e.g., Twitter)
- Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)
- Photo- and video-sharing sites (e.g., Instagram, YouTube)
- Bookmarking sites (e.g., Pinterest)

Traditional and social media have very different strengths and uses, as reflected in the table at the bottom of this page.

Developing Your Strategy

Rather than choosing to focus energy and resources on either traditional or social media, successful organizations and partnerships start by considering their stakeholders and goals. They then develop a comprehensive strategy that employs multiple media channels to connect with stakeholders and further their message.

The following questions can help you start to develop or hone your media strategy:

- Whom are we trying to reach? (This will likely include multiple, distinct groups or target

Traditional Media Goals	Social Media Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get the word out • Publicize an event to a large, general audience • Tell your story in more detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in dialogue or get feedback • Reach a more targeted, specific group • Send out brief alerts that prompt stakeholders to take immediate action

audiences. Answer the following questions separately for each group.)

- What types of media are our target audience members most likely to use frequently?
- What goals do we want to achieve? (Goals might range from simply raising awareness to engaging stakeholders in conversation or persuading them to take action.)
- What messages will further our goals?
- What media channels work best for each message and target audience?
- How will we measure our success?

Example

Audience: Teen and young-adult parents

Goal: Strengthen social connections and parenting competencies

Messages: Protective factors

Strategies:

- You might start by building a “home base” website for this initiative, with information about local support group meetings and other activities and a regularly updated blog about common parenting concerns and how the protective factors can help.
- The initiative will need its own Facebook page and Twitter feed to attract its target audience. These channels can offer timely information about events and meetings, as well as brief parenting tips and links to community supports. You can develop social connections by encouraging young parents to post their parenting questions on your social media for others to answer. This also will help you learn more about your target audience’s needs and concerns.

- A channel on a video-sharing website (such as YouTube, Vimeo, or others) could feature short videos of program participants demonstrating effective parenting practices or explaining critical stages of child development. All of these social media channels will help increase your reach and drive traffic back to your website.
- Meanwhile, a press release about the initiative may generate print, radio, or television media interest and help spread the word to an even wider audience.

Tips for Engaging Media

The following are some basic tips to get you started.

Social Media

- If you are new to social media, start by investigating your agency or organization’s guidelines for professional and personal social media use. If no such policies exist, they need to be established (and approved by agency leadership and legal counsel) before you begin to use social media at work. Social media policies should cover issues such as confidentiality and the responsibilities of mandated reporters, and they need to be disclosed to all participants on your social media sites.
- Create a personal account and spend time learning how the platforms work.
- Keep messages brief. Use a more casual, conversational tone, while maintaining your organization’s identity.
- Social media requires commitment. Websites, Facebook pages, and Twitter feeds need to be maintained with frequent updates that address your target audience members’ interests, needs, and concerns.

- Monitor and respond to comments frequently to bring users back and create a more active, engaged community.
- Reposting information from partners benefits everyone: Your followers learn something new and stay engaged, your partners gain wider exposure, and they are more likely to return the favor when you have news to share.
- Let people know where you are online. Include URLs and logos in printed materials. Encourage community members to like your Facebook page, follow you on Twitter, etc.

Traditional Media

- Get to know your local media representatives. Pay attention to who covers family and children’s issues for your local newspaper or television stations, and invite them to learn more about your mission.
- Consider inviting media representatives to participate in your community partnership. Keep them informed regularly of your progress and challenges.
- Propose an editorial briefing on the protective factors and how community members can help families stay healthy and strong.
- Offer members of your community partnership as experts on family health and safety, protective factors, and child abuse prevention.
- Use the sample press release, public service announcements, and talking points found in the Outreach Materials section of the Prevention Month microsite at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/spread-the-word/outreach-materials/>.

On the Web

The WE CAN series features a set of simple, bold social media messages designed to build awareness and engage the public and partners in child abuse and neglect prevention. The messages, developed by CANTASD, encourage action by providing links to resources and additional information. Share them freely on social media and download them for use in your own emails, newsletters, presentations, or other tools. <http://cantasd.acf.hhs.gov/>

The CDC has created *The Health Communicator’s Social Media Toolkit* to provide information about social media channels and strategies and to share lessons learned from the agency’s experience integrating social media into health communication campaigns. <https://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/tools/guidelines/socialmediatoolkit.html>

Learn more about social media on the Child Welfare Information Gateway webpage, Using Social Media in Child Welfare, at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/workforce/tools/socialmedia/>.