

ASSESSMENT

Guide MiTEAM Specialist Led Application Exercises



MiTEAM Specialist Led Application Exercise 1: Protective Factors

Purpose: Using the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework¹ to engage families in the assessment process.

Planning	
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Post-It paper • Note cards for table tent labels • Markers • Pens • Paper • A copy of the ‘Protective Factors’ document for the Protective Factor assigned to each table, for each participant: http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/about/body/ProtectiveFactorsActionSheets.pdf <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parental Resilience ○ Social Connections ○ Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development ○ Concrete Support in Times of Need ○ Social and Emotional Competence of Children <i>(See Logistics section below for further explanation.)</i> • 1 copy of ‘Core Meanings of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors’ resource sheet for each participant (to be provided at the end of training): http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/2015/Core-Meanings-of-the-SF-Protective-Factors-2015.pdf
Preparation	<p>Logistics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended 15 – 30 participants in each group from various child welfare programs. May need to modify groupings based on number of participants. • Approximate Length: 3 hours • Make copies of the ‘Protective Factors’ document (2 pages each) for the Protective Factor assigned to each table, for each participant: http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/about/body/ProtectiveFactorsActionSheets.pdf • Arrange room so that there are 5 tables seating 4 - 6 participants at each table. • Label each of the five tables with the following protective factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parental Resilience ○ Social Connections ○ Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development ○ Concrete Support in Times of Need ○ Social and Emotional Competence of Children • Write each factor, one to a page, at the top of five large Post-It papers. Stick them on the wall in front of the group.

¹ <http://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/resources/28802/pdf>

Outline

Protective Factors Content

Objective: Provide an overview of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework.

Introduction: Welcome. As you heard in the tutorial our focus for assessment is around 2 of the 4 key caseworker activities associated with assessment.

1. Collaborate with team members to identify child and family strengths, trauma histories and needs.
2. Organize and analyze all information that is collected to develop a comprehensive family assessment.

A comprehensive child and family assessment provides a big picture view of the significant factors that impact a child's safety, permanency, and well-being. In order to get a broad understanding of these significant factors we must utilize other resources outside of our FANS and CANS to collect, organize and analyze information so that we can gain, and articulate, an accurate understanding of the family's functioning. Today we are going to share information about the Protective Factor Framework and how it can be used as a tool to engage families in the assessment process.

Overview: Traditionally in our child welfare system, we've focused on risk factors, those conditions or circumstances (such as, maternal depression, substance abuse, family violence, and persistent poverty) that increase a family's risk for child abuse and neglect. Focusing exclusively on families' deficits alienates families by viewing them as objects that need to be "fixed" by our system. In a strengths-based approach, we look at each family member as the expert on their own family and the leader of their own change process. Using a strength-based approach does not mean always being "nice" or turning a blind eye to the problems. Rather, a strengths-based approach is an "overall philosophical view that requires a different way of thinking."¹ It is a way of thinking that assumes people have "existing competencies and resources for their own empowerment; that people are capable of solving problems and learning new skills; they are a part of the process rather than just being guided by a professional." Our job is to bring hope. To unveil what brought about past success for our families. Then the team can utilize those strengths to gain momentum and address the underlying issues that precipitated the protective intervention.

One tool we can use to bolster our efforts to focus on strengths or resilience is the Protective Factors Framework. Protective factors are those attributes and conditions that help to keep ALL families strong and on a pathway of healthy development and well-being.² The protective factors are interrelated and simultaneously work together to prevent or mitigate the effect of exposure to risk and stressful life events. The protective factors are used to build family strengths and create a family environment that promotes optimal child development. Using the protective factors framework can be a positive way to engage our families while assessing their capacity for positive change and growth.

The 5 Strengthening Families Protective Factors are:

- **Parental Resilience:** Managing both general life and parenting stress and functioning well when faced with stressors, challenges, or adversity; the outcome is positive change and growth.
- **Social Connections:** Having healthy, sustained relationships with people, institutions, the community, or a force greater than oneself.
- **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** Understanding the unique aspects of child development; implementing developmentally and contextually appropriate best parenting practices.
- **Concrete Support in Times of Need:** Identifying, seeking, accessing, advocating for, and receiving needed adult, child, and family services; receiving a quality of service designed to preserve parents' dignity and promote healthy development.
- **Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** Providing an environment and experiences that enable the child to form close and secure adult and peer relationships, and to experience, regulate, and express emotions.

Note: Some programs and systems do include “nurturing and attachment” as a distinct sixth protective factor in order to emphasize its importance in promoting healthy outcomes in children. The Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework was developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. They acknowledge that “nurturing and attachment” is an implicit component of the five protective factors. Thus, it is not regarded as a separate protective factor.

Small Group Activity: To learn more about each specific protective factor, each table is assigned a protective factor with handouts to review. You will have 20 minutes to review the material and work together to create a 5 - 8 minute presentation. You will want to include the following 3 things:

- General information about the protective factor, including a detailed definition.
- Specific behaviors (of a parent or child) associated with the protective factors.
- Actions we can take as caseworkers to support or build the protective factor within the family. (Pay attention to the section “Your Role” on the Action Sheet).

Note: Provide each member of the group with a copy of the Protective Factors document assigned to their table:

1. Parental Resilience
2. Social Connections
3. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
4. Concrete Support in Times of Need
5. Social and Emotional Competence of Children

For the second part of this activity, you will share your presentation with our larger group. Please be sure to discuss who will present the information to the larger group and have someone from your team write the definition of your protective factor on the large paper posted in the room. (Allow 20 minutes to create the presentation.)

Large Group Activity: Now that you've reviewed your assigned factors we would like you to share your 5-8 minute presentation with the group. While your peers are presenting you may

	<p>want to take notes as we will be using this information later today. (Choose a table to share first).</p> <p>Transition: Now that we've learned about each protective factor let's take some time to try and put this to practice.</p>
<p>Identifying Protective Factors in our Cases</p>	<p>Objective: To practice identifying and building on protective factors.</p> <p>Introduction: For the next few minutes we will look at the families we are working with and determine what protective factors these families have demonstrated during our interactions.</p> <p>Small Group Activity: Please take 5 minutes to think about a family you are working with now or have in the past. Make a list of all 5 protective factors on your paper. Now, write down in detail how you've seen the family demonstrate each protective factors. Then we'll share examples you've come up with. (Allow about 5 minutes to list behaviors).</p> <p>Large Group Discussion: Please share with us one of the examples you had for Parental Resilience (and so on). (Allow about 5 minutes for debriefing and be sure to get examples from each protective factor.)</p> <p>Small Group Activity: Now we are going to reconvene in pairs. Think about the same families you used in the first small group activity. What would you do differently to increase or enhance their protective factors? Share your responses with your partner. (3 - 5 minutes)</p> <p>Large Group Discussion: Thinking back on previous cases, do you feel results could have been different, if you could have focused more on protective factors? (Allow time for responses and inquire what would have been different.)</p>
<p>Healing Neen Practice</p>	<p>Objective: Practice identifying protective factors and how they contribute to positive change.</p> <p>Script: Now let's go back to the story of Neen. You may remember watching this trailer during the Assessment tutorial. Later we'll watch a 13 minute segment of a video describing Neen's recovery and discuss how building her protective factors allowed her to heal.</p> <p>Healing Neen trailer video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQfWE9TD_bA</p> <p>Large Group Activity: So as a large group, let's chart the areas of trauma in Neen's life as seen in the trailer. (Participants respond. Note examples below for inclusion when debriefing their answers.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abused and neglected as a child • Raped as an adult • Physically beaten as an adult • Loss of her children • Mental health issues (feelings of worthlessness and other labels) • Homeless, sleeping under a bridge, eating out of trash cans • Drug and alcohol abuse • 83 arrests and 66 convictions (incarcerations) <p>So, let's pretend you have just been assigned Neen's case and are about to meet with her for the first time. You know a little about her from the trailer video. As you learned in the</p>

Assessment tutorial, it is important to develop your own conversation starters to engage a person and explore their trauma history as you begin to case plan. “Conversation starters” are words you can say to someone to build rapport and explain the “why” behind a topic; how it is importance to the success of their case. Here is an example of a conversation starter for Neen: (pick one below)

- A lot has happened to you. I often hear from other families about things that have happened to them when they were young. These events can have a big impact on us. It can interfere with our ability to make good decisions and cause us to participate in self-harming behaviors like drug and alcohol abuse. It can also cause us to feel depressed or worthless. I would like to talk to you about your trauma history so we can help you heal and stop the self-harming behaviors and improve your life.
- Often things have happened to us that were traumatic. I would like to capture some of your experiences in a timeline—both happy times and things that you may wish hadn’t happened. That way I can better understand your trauma history so we can plan together on how to support your healing process.
- If you can imagine an iceberg, you will see that most of it is hidden below the surface and only the tip showing. We are like an iceberg. Others only see the surface and don’t understand what is below. I would like to talk to you about what might be hidden below the surface in your life.

Small group discussion: At your tables, take five minutes to discuss one conversation starter you might use to engage Neen in the analysis phase of the assessment process to explore her trauma history. Write out your conversation starter to report out to the larger group.

(Then have each table report out. Share another example or two from the list above if not already covered by the small groups)

Now let’s watch the 13 minute segment of a video describing Neen’s recovery. Listen carefully for evidence of the Protective Factor assigned to your table. You may want to jot some notes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7T1Pycw3BE> (show from 27:00 to 40:30)

Small group discussion: At your tables, take 5 minutes to discuss what you saw and list the evidence of your assigned factor. Please choose someone at your table to report to the larger group.

Large group discussion: What did you come up with at your table? (Have each group share their examples. See below for possible responses.)

1. Parental resilience:

- She was pregnant and terrified she would lose her baby. She already lost four kids to the system. This motivated her to seek treatment. She wanted the opportunity to care for the baby. She asked for more time in prison to get proper help. She knew she couldn’t have done this successfully if out of prison because she would be living on the streets again and likely the baby would be taken like the rest.

2. Social Connections:

- Safe environment in prison when treatment started

- After prison, helping others with same problems (advocate, prison groups, etc.)
 - Efforts small and large to “give back”—movie being made, speaking engagements, author book, helping others, etc.
 - Establishing positive relationships now in her life
3. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:
- She successfully completed a one year parenting course (she says on “how to be a mother”)
4. Social and Emotional Competence of Children:
- Nene is currently providing a safe and nurturing home environment for her child (private school, social life and trips with her mother, nanny to help, etc.)
 - Nene’s understanding of underlying trauma helps her better parent her child by reducing risk of trauma in her life.
5. Concrete support in times of need:
- When pregnant in prison and beginning treatment, she had the right concrete supports for providing food, clothing, shelter, and health care.
 - She was in crisis at this time in prison when she was pregnant and asked for more prison time so she could get adequate services and support in a safe and stable environment.
 - Currently provides her daughter with necessary things to be safe and well cared for.

Large Group Discussion: As you saw in the dramatic recovery of Tonier “Neen” Cain there are many Protective Factors that helped her overcome her trauma. Neen has a powerful story. As a way to close, let’s talk about what resonated with you from the video, or what sticks out to you about her story. (Allow participants to share.)

Here are a few nice points from the video: (Pick a few of these significant points/quotes made throughout the segment of the video if not already shared by participants.)

- She asks for more time in prison so she can attend trauma counseling.
- Finally someone was glad to see her. Counselor says “I’m so glad you’re here.” Wanted Neen to heal; had hope for her.
- She was in a safe environment and not being abused so she could talk about her trauma and begin to heal.
- “My mother’s lack of love for me...doesn’t define my character.”
- Therapist sits beside her, not across from her.
- “When my belief system changed my thought process changed and I started making the best decisions of my life.”
- “Treated my trauma with the hopes that I’d stay out of their system—and it worked.”
- “Treating my trauma was going to break the generation cycle in my family.”
- “Finally somebody asked Tonier, ‘what happened to you?’ and was prepared to hear the answers.”
- “They told me I was going to be nothing; that I wouldn’t amount to anything.”
- What if someone would have recognized her trauma when she was nine years old and she received treatment then? And she was allowed to embrace it then. And every agency in her life then was trained in the presence of trauma.
- Do we truly believe in the people that we serve?”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Why do we give up so easily on people who obviously have breath in their body? Where there’s breath there’s life.” • “Treat childhood trauma. You’ll get different results.”
Closure	<p>Objective: To summarize the importance of using the Protective Factors Framework and bring closure to the activity.</p> <p>Final Thoughts: Raising a child in today’s world certainly isn’t always easy. As caseworkers it is our job to help families recognize resources within themselves to rely on. We must foster an environment of hope where possible. Using the protective factors framework allows us to partner with families to take what they are doing well and use it as a springboard to build a better and brighter future.</p> <p>”In order to succeed, we must first believe that we can.” (Nikos Kazantzakis)</p> <p>Note: Provide each participant with a copy of ‘Core Meanings of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors’ resource sheet. Share that there are additional links in the resource section of the MITEAM Virtual Learning Site.</p>