

# SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



### TIP SHEET

### STRENGTHENING FAMILIES: IMPLEMENTATION

#### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10-14 is an evidence-based prevention program designed to prevent teen substance abuse and other behavior problems, strengthen parent/youth communication skills, increase academic success for youth and prevent violence and aggressive behavior at home and at school. The Strengthening Families program approaches prevention by building communication skills with a combination of role playing, discussions, learning games and family projects. Parents and youth meet in separate groups for the first hour and together as families during the second hour. Parent topics include encouraging good behavior, protecting against substance use and making house rules. Youth topics include appreciating parents, dealing with stress and handling peer pressure. Family sessions include supporting goals and dreams, building family communication and using family meetings.

#### SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM PROVIDERS:

- Strengthening Families is approved for implementation with parents and youth ages 10-14.
- Professional training by Iowa State University master trainers is required in order to be certified to facilitate the Iowa Strengthening Families program.
- Providers are required to teach 7 sessions of the mandatory program (with 4 optional booster sessions that can be taught three to twelve months after the mandatory sessions).
- Session length is two hours.
- Strengthening Families sessions should be taught once a week for seven consecutive weeks.

#### TEACHING STRATEGIES:

Planning and facilitating a successful parent family education program takes time, commitment, preparation and careful planning. The following tips will help maximize the success of Strengthening Families sessions.

##### **Scheduling, logistics and incentives are important**

Strengthening Families program developers recommend that Strengthening Families program planning and family recruitment start at least two months prior to the seven week mandatory program. Consider non-traditional scheduling of days for programs and think about the needs of your audience versus what is convenient for you when planning class dates and times. Also, pay close attention to school sporting and activity calendars, religious events and holidays when scheduling sessions. When thinking about a location to hold programming, program developers recommend using a location that is comfortable

and centrally located for families such as a school, church or community center. At least two rooms (one for youth and one for parents) are needed for each session, with one room being large enough to accommodate the joint family session. Finally, publicize incentives (i.e. free child care or transportation for families without access to cars or public transportation) during program registration so that parents know ahead of time what is available to make their attendance at sessions more enticing.

### **Trained facilitators is critical**

Three trained facilitators are needed to conduct the parent, family and joint sessions (two for youth sessions and one for parent sessions). It is recommended that trainers have strong presentation and facilitation skills and experience working with parents or youth as each facilitator is responsible for three or four families and works with the same families each week.

### **Be prepared for each lesson**

The facilitator guide features goals, a table of contents and materials needed to prepare in advance for each youth, parent or family session. Spend time reviewing the videos and discussion questions prior to each youth, parent or family session you are facilitating. Each lesson is very interactive and involves a lot of “moving parts.” Pay close attention to each “Materials Needed” section for each of the youth, parent and family sessions in the facilitator guide. Gather, copy, or create materials ahead of time so that you have what you need to conduct the discussion, games and activities for each session.

### **Keep a close watch on time**

Keep the sessions moving and be aware of time constraints so that you don’t go over time and have to rush the family session. When you are ahead of time, consider asking optional questions or using optional activities found in the facilitator guide to keep participants engaged.

### **Pay attention to family dynamics**

Working with families and managing family dynamics can be challenging at times. When talking about sensitive topics (parenting skills, stresses and problems of parents/teens), remain calm and neutral and encourage openness and respect and help parents, youth and families talk about issues without feeling judged. Disagreement can also be common in family sessions. Encourage families to reach a mutually beneficial solution or conclusion whenever possible and follow-up when bigger issues occur.

### **Follow-up with participants regularly**

Send check-in or reminder emails, texts (or whatever communication method parents prefer) to encourage families to complete home practice activities.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

For more information about technical assistance or the services we offer, please contact [providerservices@prevention.org](mailto:providerservices@prevention.org) or call 217-836-5346.

Iowa Strengthening Families website: [www.extension.iastate.edu/sfp10-14/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/sfp10-14/)

Iowa Strengthening Families Program Contact: Cathy Hockaday, Ph.D., Program Coordinator  
515.294.7601 or [hockaday@iastate.edu](mailto:hockaday@iastate.edu)

SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices – NREPP  
[www.nrepp.samhsa.gov](http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov)