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Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life for Michigan's Families Training Initiative

October 2022 – June 2023

The Michigan Federation for Children and Families is thrilled to have partnered with **The New Foster Care** to support private agency leaders who have been certified by the Children's Trust Fund Alliance to deliver the training, **"Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life in Your Work."**

As a result of attending the training of the trainers and becoming certified in December 2021, the training leaders developed a curriculum specific to Michigan families, adapting what they have learned about bringing this framework to life in their everyday work. The training uniquely focuses on how to document this work with families in case contacts and throughout service planning reports, as well as how to consistently assess, monitor, and measure progress with families in the five domains of the Protective Factors framework.

Through the availability of both recorded webinars and live training events, workers and supervisors in family preservation agencies can access this Michigan-focused training package free of charge due to the generous **support of The New Foster Care. Between October 2022 and June 2023, the Federation and its team of certified trainers provided training to 242 workers and supervisors at 13 agencies in all 5 business regions.** Participants have given overwhelmingly positive feedback on the applicability of this training in their daily work.

From October 2022 through June 2023, participants were provided the new opportunity to attend **10 Lunch & Learn** sessions. The Lunch & Learn Series expanded upon training topics, provided a space for peer-to-peer learning, along with the opportunity for additional mentoring from the certified trainers.

Background

Protective factors are conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities, or the larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk, thereby increasing the health and well-being of children and families. Protective factors help parents to find resources, supports, or coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress. Protective factors help ensure that children and youth function well at home, in school, at work, and in the community. At the core of this nationally recognized framework, protective factors are the strengths that help support families and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has outlined in family preservation contracts use of this Protective Factors Framework with families engaged in the Families First of Michigan (FFM), Families Together Building Solutions (FTBS), Family Reunification Program (FRP), and Parent Partner services. Family preservation workers are administering initial and closing Protective Factors Surveys with families and incorporating the factors into goal setting, assessing how the family is progressing with improving protective factors, and noting the differences between the initial and closing surveys, demonstrating progress made during engagement of services. This is critical work with families and correlates with the goal of measuring and increasing effective parenting and reducing abusive or neglectful behaviors within a family.

Addressing the Need

As an association of community-based agencies administering the Protective Factors Survey and assessing impact and progress in the five Protective Factors domains with families, the Michigan Federation for Children and Families' member agencies came together with a shared goal of increasing consistency among programs to provide the greatest impact with families. New family preservation workers need to develop an understanding of the philosophy and how to effectively utilize it in their day-to-day work, and supervisors need to be able to mentor and support their new staff in this area on an ongoing basis in order to ensure Protective Factors are integrated into all engagement with families in their homes and communities. Recognizing this need, members worked with the Federation to do an environmental scan of what resources existed to meet this need, and through the one-time initial financial support of Casey Family Programs developed a program to support eight private agency representatives to become certified by the Children's Trust Fund Alliance—an organization with expertise and an established learning community in this area—to deliver the training, "Bringing the Protective Factors Framework to Life in Your Work."

As a result of becoming certified, the training leaders developed a compelling Protective Factors Training Series to equip workers and supervisors with the knowledge base and skill development to effectively and accurately assess a family's risks and identify effective interventions to help them address those issues using the Protective Factors Framework. The training is focused on why as a state we believe in this framework, how it strengthens families, and the long-term positive outcomes it helps families achieve. Using a train-the-trainer model of implementation, the training series includes a comprehensive approach from onboarding workers, supporting supervisors in implementing the framework. A unique facet of this training program is that the trainers provide ongoing support through coaching office hours, consultation, and mentoring, and help with assessment, goal writing, safety planning, monitoring, and measuring success and progress.

With the generous support of The New Foster Care, The Federation was able to continue to provide the Protective Factors Training Series in FY 2023, hosting five training sessions for ongoing workers, three training sessions for supervisors, and nine Lunch & Learn sessions.

Lunch & Learn topics included the following:

- Documenting Protective Factors in Case Notes & Reports
- Documenting Protective Factors in Safety Plans
- Documenting Protective Factors in Family Goals
- Best Practices: Authentic Partnerships with Parents and Caregivers
- Open Q&A: How Can We Help?

The Federation has partnered with MDHHS to continue providing the Protective Factors Training Series through FY 2024. The partnership with MDHHS includes supporting four (4) new private agency representatives to become certified by the Children's Trust Fund Alliance and expand the training to foster care and adoption staff. With support from MDHHS, the protective factors framework will be further embedded into Michigan's child welfare system, building on the strengths, resiliency, and capacity of parents and children.

Evaluation Findings

To help assess participants' satisfaction with the trainings, the post-training survey administered immediately after completion of trainings asked participants to rate the correlation between the knowledge/skills the trainings provided and those advertised in the course learning objectives. All of the training participants self-reported a greater level of understanding following training.

Here's what trainees had to say on the question, "What specific knowledge or skills from this training do you plan to implement in your professional work with children and families engaged with the child welfare system?"

- I think the Protective Factors trainings should be the first new workers attend. I hope this training is offered again as new workers come on board. Very helpful!
- Using protective factors within safety planning.
- Activities to enhance utilization of strengths-based language.
- This was a great initial understanding as I help our agency move toward increasing our Family Preservation services.
- I plan to implement all of the information and now have a better understanding.
- I plan to implement more coaching techniques with my staff.

Through the ten Lunch & Learn sessions offered in FY23, participants shared the following feedback post-training survey:

- I have implemented the skills and knowledge immediately into practices from the Lunch and Learns.
- I enjoyed hearing from others involved in working with the family system.
- I appreciate all the information provided. It will help me with becoming more comfortable and knowledgeable with presenting information to my clients.
- Love these short presentations!