

# *Building Strong Families Facilitator Training*

*CTF-D-0904*

CTF funding allows 20 facilitators to offer 53 workshops and reach 186 adults and 457 youth

## Report overview: Training and program impacts

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A 2008-2009 Children's Trust Fund (CTF) Discretionary Grant provided funds to train 20 additional facilitators to deliver the Building Strong Families: Challenges and Choices program to Missouri families.

This report shares feedback from facilitators who attended Building Strong Families facilitator training covered by the CTF scholarship slots. Facilitators reported on the training itself, the skills and information they learned (and are using), and the changes they found in the families and youth who attend their Building Strong Families programs.

*Note: Evaluation questions corresponded to the program outcomes for facilitators and families, which are listed in the following sections.*

## Program overview

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The Building Strong Families (BSF) program goals are tied to family strength factors that have been identified in research. The strengths that families gain are part of the protective factors that the Center for the Study of Social Policy found that correlate to reductions in child abuse and neglect.

Building Strong Families (<http://extension.missouri.edu/bsf>) helps families find and build strengths, improve their relationships and increase positive communication. The program, created by University of Missouri Extension, covers 13 topics and uses hands-on activities to involve participants. A parallel curriculum for youth is in development and currently has six topics with other modules being added. The adult and youth curriculums can be used in stand-alone programs or in conjunction with one another for a Whole Family Approach.

## Building Strong Families facilitator trainings

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Through the CTF Discretionary Grant, we offered 20 scholarship slots at three BSF facilitator trainings:

- November 10-12, 2008; Columbia, MO = Six scholarship participants
- February 3-4, 2009; Jackson, MO = Four scholarship participants
- April 7-9, 2009; Columbia, MO = Ten scholarship participants

Educators came from many different areas of Missouri and represented the following agencies:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters: Boone County and central MO
- Community Member: Boone County
- Central Missouri Community Action: Boone, Cole and central MO counties
- Community Resource Council: Poplar Bluff
- Missouri Ozarks Community Action: Phelps County
- Capable Kids and Families: Rolla and Phelps c County
- Probation and Parole: Poplar Bluff and covers Butler, Ripley, Carter and Wayne counties
- Missouri Mentoring Partnership: Cape Girardeau and covers Cape and Butler counties
- East Missouri Action Agency: Cape Girardeau and surrounding counties
- Department of Corrections: Tipton
- A town mayor
- University of Missouri Extension; Jackson County and south central MO
- Military and Family Life Consultant: covers all of MO
- Centro Latino Center: Columbia and surrounding counties
- Green Hills Community Action Agency: Grundy, Livingston, Mercer, Harrison, Linn, Daviess and Putnam counties

- Missouri Afterschool Network: St. Louis and southeastern counties
- The Community Partnership: Phelps, Pulaski and Crawford counties
- A Helping Hand to Families in Need: Jackson, Buchanan, Nodaway, Platte, Andrew, DeKalb and Clay counties

## Training evaluations: Facilitators' skills and networking

### *Facilitator outcomes:*

- *Facilitators work more effectively with audiences.*
- *Facilitators use ideas from the training to gain stronger facilitation and teaching skills (i.e., better communication skills, increased confidence levels, more teaching opportunities and a better understanding of experiential learning).*
- *Facilitators support each other within a statewide/nationwide Building Strong Families network.*

Facilitators attended the Building Strong Families training to get certified in the program. At the training they received program content information, facilitation skills practice, learned about University of Missouri Extension, shared program ideas and had an opportunity to network with other educators from around the state. The training focused on the importance of the program's strength-based philosophy and the experiential learning concept.

Facilitators shared that they gained an understanding of the hands-on approach and how to involve the families in their own learning. They also learned more information about the program and liked the way the program is set up.

Have your facilitator skills changed since you started teaching this program? If yes, how?

- Yes, I have more background and a new familiarity with the program that I didn't have before.
- I have learned that activity keeps people interested and how to incorporate the people into the workshop.
- I have already been facilitating meetings and classes for four years, however I really like the way the materials are set up. It is very easy to use.
- Yes, they have changed some. It is necessary for me to sometimes modify the workshops to fit our ladies' individual needs and situations.

I have learned that activity keeps people interested and how to incorporate the people into the workshop.

- Yes, I have gotten to experience what it is like to teach.
- More knowledge on how to actively engage participants.
- More knowledge on how to allow participants to become a part of their own learning process.

Part of the program structure is for facilitators to feel that they are part of a network. Just as we want families to gain a support network with other families participating in the program, we also want facilitators to be able to get information and ideas from each other. They were asked about how they were using this network.

Some are sharing ideas with each other and getting information from the program Web site. This is an area we can expand to encourage more interaction with trained facilitators.

Please check any of the following if you have:

- Talked with other trained facilitators to get program ideas. (5)
- Used the Building Strong Families Web site. (3)
- Worked with other trained facilitators to teach or plan a Building Strong Families workshop or series. (3)

## Facilitators offer BSF programs

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*Facilitator outcome: Facilitators implement the program with local families.*

Facilitators gave feedback through an anonymous online Google survey (approved by the University Institutional Research Board office). Participation was voluntary and 11 of the 20 facilitators reported on how they are using the program. The questions corresponded to the facilitator and family outcomes.

Facilitators offered 53 workshops (many as part of series) and used the program as part of health fairs, teen parent meetings, DFS home visits, a series with women who are victims of domestic violence, a school quarterly newsletter and in their personal lives. Facilitators reached 186 adults and 457 youth, since getting trained in BSF this past year.

Several people mentioned they have workshops and series planned for the coming year (including with the school district in 2009-2010, with afterschool programs and with families in Livingston County).

## Program evaluation: Changes in families

### *Family outcomes:*

- *Parents will adopt positive discipline practices with their children.*
- *Adults and children will acquire life skills.*
- *Participants will feel stronger as a family unit.*
- *Family members use at least one idea to set up meaningful time with their children or with each other.*
- *Family members use at least one idea to improve communication with each other.*

Facilitators reported that they noticed positive changes in many of the people they are working with. Families are changing how they interact with family members and kids are using the program information to better understand their families.

Here are some of the follow-up responses from facilitators:

How have the youth and families used the program information?

- The individuals have reported that they will incorporate the lessons into their daily life.
- Each youth participating comes away with a budget that works for their families and were armed with info to make wise choices about spending. The gardening class was amazing — we planted container gardens that could be done no matter where our youth lived. We did that last year and the youth have taken the initiative to do it again for their families this year.
- Built more positive parent-child interaction.
- Communicated in a more positive and healthy manner.
- Several of the moms have used the information.
- To better understand their family.

Families used the program information to build more positive parent-child interaction and to communicate in a more positive and healthy manner.

Have you noticed positive changes in the youth/families? If yes, please give examples of specific changes.

- Yes, taking the initiative to plant another garden this year to help supplement their food. Also the kids have taken some initiative to open savings accounts and save what money they can for emergencies. They have also been more financially savvy.
- Some are only with us for a brief period of time, but I have seen positive changes from the ones who have come to several sessions.
- Participants routinely give positive feedback on the success of using “I Messages” and strategies used in the Positive Discipline module.
- Families love the Strengthening Families exercises and activities.

The kids have taken some initiative to open savings account and save what money they can for emergencies.

One facilitator worked with 16 participants during the course of five workshops. As a follow-up to the series, she asked participants how they are using the program with their families. More than half of the participants are using ideas and skills they learned to increase their positive communication, improve their family relationships and have more meaningful time with their children.

She found the following:

- Nine (56 percent) are using at least one idea to strengthen their family relationships.
- Seven (44 percent) are communicating with their families in a more positive way.
- Nine (56 percent) are communicating with their families more.
- Six (38 percent) are spending more time with their children.
- Nine (56 percent) are planning more meaningful time with their children and families.

Participants routinely give positive feedback on the success of using “I Messages” and strategies used in the Positive Discipline module.

## Special thanks to CTF for the scholarship opportunity

Participants told us over and over as to how much they appreciated the scholarship that covered the training fees. Many agencies face tight budgets and the scholarship allowed them to get certified. Here are a few responses from facilitators:

- Thanks again for the great training and for the use of the scholarship. I have shared your BSF Web site with all the other MFLCs [Military and Family Life Consultant] from 15 states...you may be contacted!
- I wanted to say again thank you so much for allowing me to attend the class. You did an awesome job and I truly will utilize this class to try and better the offenders at Tipton as they transition back to their everyday life on the streets.
- We can incorporate this with both our youth/parents and the families. Thanks SO much!!
- My experience as a volunteer tutor at MU's Learning Center this semester has provided even more evidence that helping others develop their potential is my true calling. Although I am still searching for the perfect opportunity, I can visualize all kinds of options – teaching, volunteering in public schools, organizing support groups, advocacy – where I can employ my strengths and the skills that Building Strong Families training will provide to help others while realizing my own potential.
- Thank you for the scholarship opportunity.
- Thank you so much! The scholarship will be very helpful.
- Thank you so very much for this opportunity. I can utilize both programs [the adult and youth programs] within the Employment and Training Program. Once again, thank you.