



Utilizing HOPE and Strengthening Families within Systems

The basic concepts of HOPE and Strengthening Families are fairly straightforward:

1. Consider both strengths and risk factors in your work with families.
2. Promote access to the Four Building Blocks and the Protective Factors.
3. Meaningfully engage those with lived experience in an advisory capacity.

But those three ideas can sometimes feel hard to incorporate into the systems themselves. Regardless of the sector that you work in, there are some simple ways for you to incorporate HOPE and Strengthening Families into your work.

1 Train your team

It can be really helpful to have everyone on the same page around utilizing HOPE and Strengthening Families. If you have a local Facilitator who can provide trainings, that's great! If not, you can share our [online modules](#) with your team to learn more about HOPE and Strengthening Families.

2 Look at your forms

Do your intake and assessment forms feel strengths-based, or do they solely focus on deficits and challenges? If you have power to change the form, can you add questions about strengths and how families currently access the Building Blocks and Protective Factors? If you can't change the form, can you change how it's delivered to help it feel more relational? [Review our video library](#) to see how the same form can be used with and without a HOPE lens.

3 Share HOPE and Strengthening Families

Families, especially those who are systems-impacted, often hear about all the things that they are doing wrong. Incorporate conversations about HOPE and Strengthening Families into each visit with families. Share the research with them about Positive Childhood Experiences and celebrate the ways they are already accessing the Four Building Blocks and the Protective Factors. Engage in brainstorming activities with them to identify ways you can help remove barriers so they can have MORE access. Follow-up with them on the topic over time to see if their access increases.

4 Examine your policies

Often, organizational policies have the unintended effect of blocking access to the Four Building Blocks or the Protective Factors. Look at your policies, especially any that seem to have any punitive components to them (e.g., discipline policies, no show/late policies, missed child visit policies, etc.). Be curious about which Building Blocks and Protective Factors the policy impacts. Is the policy promoting or blocking access to those paths to resilience?

Are there certain populations who might be disproportionately affected by the policy? What would happen if you revised the policy, with the input of those who are impacted by the policy, to prioritize increasing access to resilience?

5 Engage those with lived experience

Our work becomes so much more meaningful when we have individuals with lived experience within whatever system we are working in at the table. This can include youth who have been involved with (or aged out of) our systems, caregivers who have been involved in systems with their children, and, sometimes, people like foster parents, kinship caregivers, or service providers who have interacted with the system. Engaging those with experience with the system in your work--whether it be on staff or in advisory groups, focus groups, or project-based taskforces--helps create policies that are fair, forms that are accessible, environments that are welcoming, and programming that is culturally relevant. It also creates space for individuals to access opportunities for engagement, social connections, and emotional growth. Be sure that you compensate community members for their time and contributions.



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