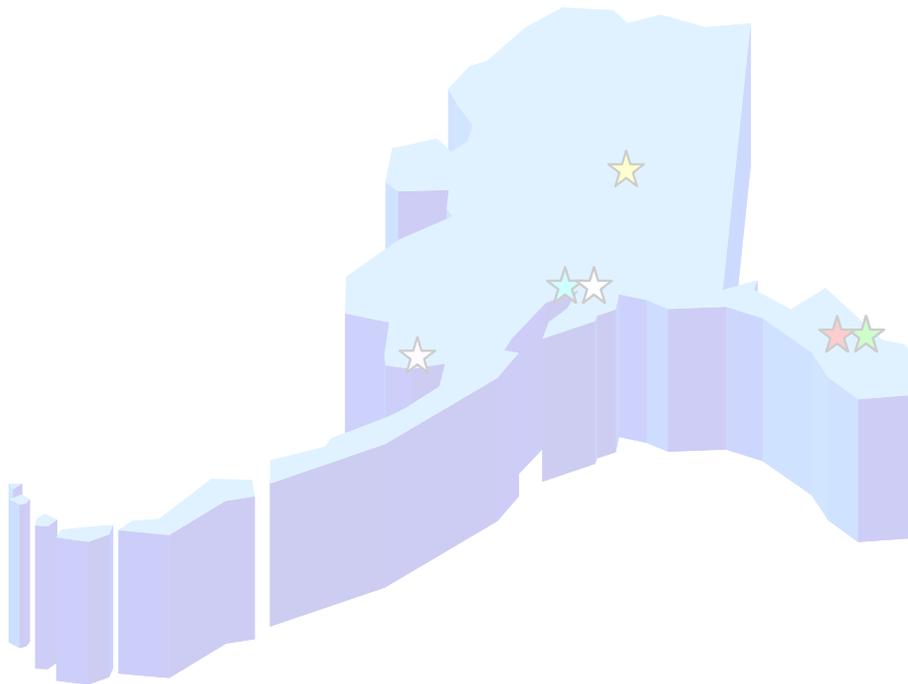


# ALASKA'S STRENGTHENING FAMILIES INITIATIVE

2006 Pilot Sites  
Year-End and Summit Report



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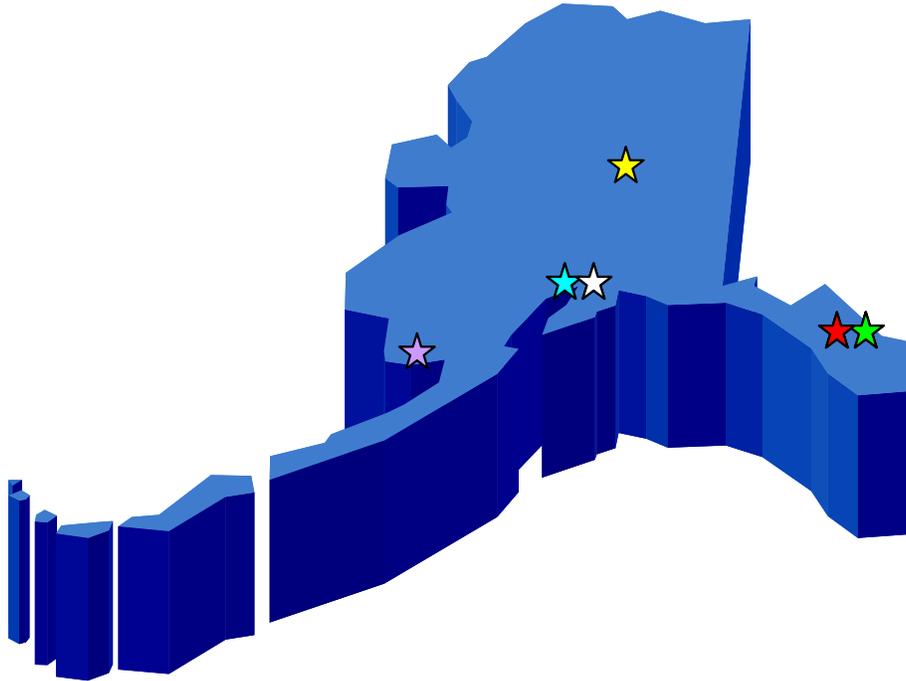
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# THE ALASKA STRENGTHENING FAMILIES INITIATIVE (SFI) STATEWIDE TEAM

## **Alaska's SFI Statewide Leadership Team Includes:**

Tammy Sandoval Deputy Commissioner	Office of Children's Services Department of Health & Social Services
Kaye Saxton, Trustee	Alaska's Children's Trust Fund
Mary Rosenzweig, Executive Director	Alaska's Children's Trust Fund
Claudia Shanley Systems Reform Administrator	Office of Children's Services Department of Health & Social Services
Paul Sugar Head Start Collaboration Director	Teaching and Learning Department of Education and Early Development
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Stephanie Birch MCH Title V and CSHCN Director	Women's, Children's and Family Health Division of Public Health Department of Health & Social Services
Colleen Turner, Executive Director	Resource Center for Parents and Children Prevent Child Abuse America Affiliate
Candace Winkler, Executive Director	Child Care Connection Child Care Resource & Referral Network Representative
Carole Prentice, Program Manager	System for Early Education and Development (SEED) University of Alaska Southeast
Sheri White, Parent Representative	
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Claudia Shanley Systems Development Coordinator	Office of children's Services, DHSS, State of Alaska
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<u>SFI Program Facilitator</u>	
Charlie Adams	Leading EDGE Consulting
<u>SFI Virtual Assistant</u>	
Jeanette Gardiner	Gardiner Business Support Services

# ALASKA'S SFI PILOT SITES



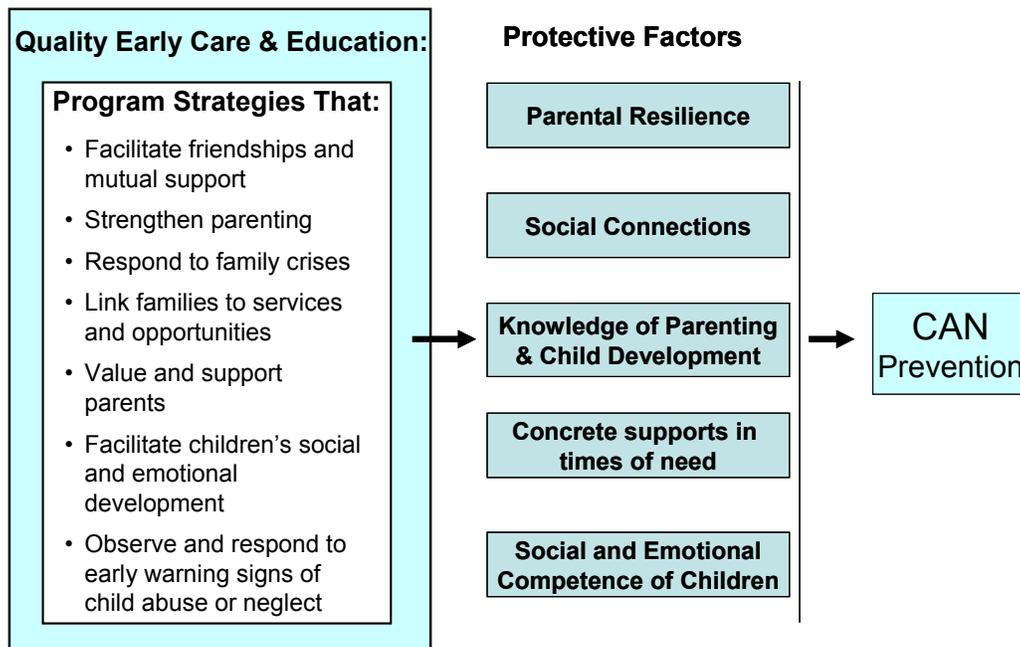
-  **Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care** **Shannan Meyer**
-  **Bristol Bay Native Association Head Start Programs**
  - Dillingham: Anne Shade, Carolyn Hoseth, Andrea Hurley
  - New Styuhok: Matriona Chunak
  - Togiak: Roger Wasillie
  - Naknek: Karen Lopez-Johnson
-  **Juneau Catholic Social Services (Transitional Living)** **Helen Kalk**
-  **Juneau Montessori School** **Lupita Alvarez**
-  **Open Arms Child Development Center** **Lenetta Colbert**
-  **RurAL CAP Child Development Center** **Lisa Danielson  
Eva Hansmeyer**

# INTRODUCTION TO THE PILOT SITES OF SFI ALASKA

Alaska was one of seven states to be selected through a nationwide RFP process to pilot a new, proven, cost-effective strategy to prevent child abuse and neglect. The strategy involved early childhood centers working with families to build protective factors around children. The funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Center for the Study for Social Policy allowed Alaska to select six Pilot Sites which would put to the test this strategy by enhancing the protective factors through program strategies that would produce new and refreshingly different results. Each of the six centers selected as Pilot Sites were diverse in their scope of services and methods of serving young children and their families, thereby offering the initiative a view of how protective factors and the strategies play out in various early care and learning scenarios.

The mission of the SFI program is demonstrated in the model below.

## How Early Childhood Programs Contribute to Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect



## TIMELINE OF SFI ALASKA EVENTS

### **October 2005 – December 2006**

A timeline of SFI events and services was put into place over the past eighteen months, beginning with the grant submission to the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation from the Department of Health and Social Services in the spring of 2005. Upon notice of approval of the grant, the department personnel began the process of determining the selection of Pilot Sites for SFI Alaska.

235 centers and preschool programs were sent the overview of the Strengthening Families Initiative and asked to respond with a letter if they were interested. Upon receipt of the letters of intent, a mini-grant RFP was prepared for those child care centers who had serious intent to continue forward and be a contender as a Pilot Site. One of the qualifications for submission of the mini-grant was that the child care center was already producing high quality results as a child care center. Documentation to verify high quality child care was essential in order to position the center to begin the shift toward a family support model of services. Fifteen letters of intent were received and each of these programs completed an application/mini-grant. A committee selected six centers from the applications received to be Pilot Sites for the SFI movement in Alaska.

As a part of the process; staff, parents, and community members (the community team) of the selected Pilot Sites jointly completed an SFI Self-Assessment and committed to attending the SFI orientation in October 2005. During the orientation meeting the team shared their current status in working with families within their centers. Through a facilitated process, a plan for each center was initiated.

Following the orientation, the Pilot Sites were asked to finish their action plan upon their return to their communities. Two follow-up teleconference calls occurred to assist with the planning phase and to ensure that all of the Pilot Sites completed and submitted their plans. The plans then became the foundation for checks and balances within the program, and between the programs and the funders.

In early February 2006, a facilitator was hired to conduct teleconferences, research the latest in family studies and protective factors, and provide technical assistance to the Pilot Sites. The teleconferences were termed "Learning Networks" due to the depth of study that went into each monthly hour and a half call. The focus of the Learning Networks was to encourage the centers to stay connected with each other, share their insights and challenges, and most of all to test out which strategies worked best in their current environments.

Being and staying involved in the Strengthening Families Initiative required four very distinct activities:

1. Completing a Pre/Post Self-Assessment and Learning Goals Action Plan.
2. Regularly attending the monthly Learning Network teleconferences, and actively participating during the teleconference including follow-up on the individual action plans.
3. Selecting practices that promoted the protective factors and reporting back to the Learning Network on what worked and what didn't.
4. Attending and being present at two Partnership Summits; the first held in March 2006 for in conjunction with the Partnerships in Early Childhood Conference and the second held in December 2006 specifically for SFI, Office of Children's Services (OCS)/Child Protective Services (CPS), and local interested child care programs.

Of the six selected Pilot Sites, five completed all four of the steps above. One program, Juneau Catholic Social Services, phased out of the project mid-summer 2006.

Over the course of the past year, nine Learning Networks were conducted and well documented, three summits (including orientation) were attended, every center received more than three technical assistance events from the facilitator and co-coordinators of the project, and relationships were developed among the Pilot Sites members and their community service networks.

It is the intent of this report to share the "learning's" that took place, the challenges each center encountered, and the innovations that will sustain. The SFI movement in Alaska has been embraced by the centers, noticed by the communities, and endeared by the families who were fortunate to be involved with the SFI Pilot Site centers. As one family member from New Stuyahok stated,

*"All it took for me was to hear that the wording of a mental health observation for my child was changed to a social/emotional visit; that made me feel respected."*

# ALASKA'S SFI PILOT SITES SELF-ASSESSMENT 2006 ANALYSIS

As an initial activity for involvement in the SFI project the Pilot Sites were asked to complete a self-assessment. The SFI Self-Assessment contains strategies used by exemplary programs to support families. There are seven program strategies with 77 examples of practices to be implemented which would support the strategies. Programs were asked to rate their current practices from poor to excellent. The initial (Pre) Self-Assessment was conducted in February 2006. In December 2006, as a ritual for completion of the project, sites were asked to complete the same Self-Assessment, only this time it was provided to them in an on-line survey format.

The following pages represent the analysis of the Pilot Sites pre-self-assessment (March 2006) and the post-self-assessment (December 2006). The data is organized into a chart format; the first column of the chart documents the Program Strategies which are taken directly from the SFI National Framework and are strategies that promote the protective factors. The second column highlights the practices that each Pilot Site has excelled in within the past year. Excelling is defined as movement from initially scoring poor/fair on a program strategy to scoring excellent in the post assessment; after several months of focused work on that particular program strategy. The third column indicates the percentage of increase from poor/fair to excellent the Pilot Sites scored per program strategy area. Areas in which a program strategy may have decreased are also indicated in this section on the chart.

The **BOLDED** areas reveal as a glance, which Program Strategies have shown the most improvement as a result of the Pilot Site's involvement in the Strengthening Families Initiative.

As a synopsis, the points on the following page list the Pilot Site and the program strategies they have made the greatest improvement in based on their efforts over the past 12 months.

## **Program Strategies: Areas of Greatest Improvement by Pilot Site**

### **Bristol Bay Native Association Head Start – Dillingham**

#### Areas of greatest improvement:

- 1) Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support
- 2) Value & Support Parents

### **Juneau Montessori School – Juneau**

#### Areas of greatest improvement:

- 1) Respond to Family Crisis
- 2) Link Families to Services & Opportunities

### **Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed child Care – Anchorage**

#### Areas of greatest improvement:

- 1) Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support
- 2) Linking Families to Services and Opportunities
- 3) Facilitate Children's Social & Emotional Development
- 4) Observe & Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse or Neglect
- 5) Value & Support Parents

### **Open Arms – Fairbanks**

#### Areas of greatest improvement:

- 1) Respond to Family Crisis
- 2) Link Families to Services & Opportunities
- 3) Facilitate Children's Social & Emotional Development
- 4) Observe & Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse or Neglect

### **RurAL CAP Child Development Center – Anchorage**

#### Areas of greatest improvement:

- 1) Facilitate Children's Social & Emotional Development
- 2) Observe & Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse or Neglect

## Pilot Site: Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care - Anchorage

(Bold areas indicate program strategies and practices that have demonstrated the greatest area of improvement)

Program Strategies	Practices that Excelled in Past 12 Months	Percentage of Improvement (Based on Pre/Post Self-Assessment)
<b>#1: Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Comfortable space is now available for families to meet informally.</b></li> <li>• <b>Program support for parent-organized social/educational events and activities.</b></li> <li>• <b>Reaching out to isolated families in the city.</b></li> </ul>	<b>38% increase from poor/fair to excellent.</b>
#2: Strengthening Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on parenting is EVERYWHERE!</li> <li>• Knowledgeable staff regarding parenting practices of different cultures/ethnic groups.</li> <li>• Information on special needs for parents is readily available.</li> </ul>	14% increase from poor/fair to excellent.
#3: Respond to Family Crises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents can turn to staff in time of need.</li> <li>• Parents understand the role of staff on particular issues.</li> <li>• Staff respond to family crises immediately.</li> <li>• Staff are proactive in response to signs of family distress.</li> </ul> <p><b>Decreased:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-disciplinary staff teaming.</li> <li>• Staff time off if needed when working with families under stress.</li> </ul>	25% increase from poor/fair to excellent
<b>*#4: Link Families to Services &amp; Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Collaborative links with other community services providers.</b></li> </ul>	<b>100% increase from no response possible to fair/excellent.*</b>
<b>*#5: Facilitate Children's Social &amp; Emotional Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Development of social/emotional curricula.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff coach parents on effective interactions with their children.</b></li> </ul>	<b>100% increase from no response possible to fair/excellent.*</b>
<b>*#6: Observe &amp; Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse or Neglect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff can now monitor and follow signs that a family may be under stress.</b></li> <li>• <b>Protocols for child abuse and neglect reporting are understood by staff.</b></li> </ul>	<b>100% increase from no response possible to fair/excellent.*</b>
<b>*#7: Value &amp; Support Parents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff know parents individually and know them by name.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff recognize and value parent contributions.</b></li> <li>• <b>Parents are connected to resources that explore various ways of parenting.</b></li> </ul>	<b>100% increase from no response possible to fair/excellent.*</b>

\*These strategies and practices were not the norm for this program prior to enrollment/involvement in the Strengthening Families Initiative.

## Pilot Site: Bristol Bay Native Association Head Start – Dillingham

(*Bold areas indicate program strategies and practices that have demonstrated the greatest area of improvement*)

Program Strategies	Practices that Excelled in Past 12 Months	Percentage of Improvement (Based on Pre/Post Self-Assessment)
<b>#1: Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Connecting families with other families with similar interests.</b></li> <li>• <b>Fostering a sense of community.</b></li> </ul>	<b>62% increase from poor/fair to excellent</b>
#2: Strengthening Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased parent information.</li> <li>• Opportunities created for parents to explore.</li> </ul> <p><b>Decreased:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities created for parents to explore cultural/ethnic expectations/practices.</li> </ul>	22% increase from poor/fair to excellent
#3: Respond to Family Crises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents understanding of the staff's role on particular issues.</li> </ul> <p><b>Decreased:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-disciplinary staff teaming.</li> </ul>	17% increase from poor/fair to excellent
#4: Link Families to Services & Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was already an area of excellence for BBNA.</li> </ul>	No Increase
#5: Facilitate Children's Social & Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of social/emotional curricula.</li> </ul>	11% increase from poor/fair to excellent
#6: Observe & Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse or Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff understands how to complete a child welfare report.</li> <li>• Follow-up after placement.</li> </ul>	30% increase from poor/fair to excellent
<b>#7: Value &amp; Support Parents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Father involvement.</b></li> <li>• <b>Parents connected to resources.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff recognize parents' growth.</b></li> <li>• <b>Parents recognize own growth.</b></li> </ul>	<b>31% increase from poor/fair to excellent</b>

## Pilot Site: Juneau Montessori School – Juneau

*(Bold areas indicate program strategies and practices that have demonstrated the greatest area of improvement)*

Program Strategies	Practices that Excelled in Past 12 Months	Percentage of Improvement (Based on Pre/Post Self-Assessment)
#1: Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of formal and informal communication and support mechanisms.</li> <li>• Social/educational events &amp; activities.</li> <li>• Outreach to isolated families.</li> </ul>	33% increase from poor/fair to excellent.
#2: Strengthening Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parenting information/take home materials has increased.</li> <li>• Materials available in multiple languages.</li> <li>• Staff knowledge of parenting practices.</li> <li>• Opportunities created for parents to explore.</li> <li>• Parenting tips and issues discussions.</li> <li>• Information on developmental challenges/special needs.</li> <li>• Opportunities to strengthen bonds.</li> </ul>	50% increase from poor/fair to excellent.
<b>#3: Respond to Family Crises</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Parents can turn to staff.</b></li> <li>• <b>Parents know role of staff on particular issues.</b></li> <li>• <b>Emergency funds to assist families in crisis.</b></li> <li>• <b>Program maintains resource and referral links.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff response to family crises.</b></li> <li>• <b>Mobilization of staff with other parents.</b></li> <li>• <b>Proactive response to signs of family distress.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff receive support at all times.</b></li> </ul>	<b>84% increase from poor/fair to excellent.</b>
<b>#4: Link Families to Services &amp; Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Development of family plans.</b></li> <li>• <b>Access to recent information re: services in community.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff make referrals &amp; understand referral network.</b></li> <li>• <b>Actively building collaborative links in community.</b></li> <li>• <b>Parents are encouraged to share information re: community resources for/to other families.</b></li> </ul>	<b>84% increase from poor/fair to excellent.</b>

Program Strategies	Practices that Excelled in Past 12 Months	Percentage of Improvement (Based on Pre/Post Self-Assessment)
#5: Facilitate Children's Social & Emotional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of social/emotional curricula.</li> <li>• Opportunities to learn and discuss social/emotional development of children.</li> <li>• Children are encouraged to express feelings.</li> <li>• Protocol established for staff to discuss child's social/emotional development.</li> </ul>	45% increase from poor/fair to excellent.
#6: Observe & Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse or Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff are trained to recognize early signs of child abuse and neglect.</li> <li>• Program has established protocols for reporting child abuse and neglect.</li> <li>• Staff help find suitable respite care/emergency crisis services.</li> <li>• Advocacy for child and parent during crisis.</li> </ul>	40% increase from poor/fair to excellent.
#7: Value & Support Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific activities are offered for fathers, mothers, and other family members.</li> <li>• Father involvement.</li> <li>• Opportunities for parents to discuss past parenting practices.</li> <li>• Parents connected to resources to explore various ways of parenting.</li> <li>• Staff recognize parents' growth and efforts.</li> <li>• Parents are provided opportunities for personal growth and development.</li> </ul>	44% increase from poor/fair to excellent

## Pilot Site: Open Arms Child Development Center- Fairbanks

(Bold areas indicate program strategies and practices that have demonstrated the greatest area of improvement)

Program Strategies	Practices that Excelled in Past 12 months	Percentage of Improvement (Based on Pre/Post Self-Assessment)
#1: Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfortable space for families.</li> <li>• Opportunities for families to socialize.</li> <li>• Staff reaches out to isolated families.</li> </ul> <p><b>Decreased:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal and informal communication/support mechanisms.</li> <li>• Connects families with similar interests.</li> </ul>	38% increase from poor/fair to excellent.
#2: Strengthening Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parenting information/new parenting practices.</li> <li>• Information on developmental challenges.</li> <li>• Staff concerns about parenting techniques/behaviors.</li> <li>• Special needs children &amp; parents.</li> </ul>	29% increase from poor/fair to excellent.
#3: <b>Respond to Family Crises</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Role of staff on particular issues.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff responds to family crises.</b></li> <li>• <b>Program maintains resource and referral links.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff mobilize families in crisis.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff receives support on working w/ families in crisis.</b></li> <li>• <b>Excellent support for their military families.</b></li> </ul>	<b>50% increase from poor/fair to excellent.</b>
#4: <b>Link Families to Services &amp; Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Up to date access to information on services in the community.</b></li> <li>• <b>Increase in referrals to outside services.</b></li> <li>• <b>Collaborative links strengthened in community.</b></li> </ul>	<b>50% increase from poor/fair to excellent.</b>

Program Strategies	Practices that Excelled in Past 12 months	Percentage of Improvement (Based on Pre/Post Self-Assessment)
<b>#5:</b> <b>Facilitate Children's Social &amp; Emotional Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Social/Emotional development curricula.</li> <li>• Parents involved in S/E curricula.</li> <li>• Staff coaching parents on interaction.</li> <li>• Children able to express feelings through words, artwork and expressive play.</li> <li>• Staff modeling behavior on S/E expressiveness.</li> <li>• Staff concerns about child's S/E development.</li> </ul>	<b>67% increase from poor/fair to excellent.</b>
<b>#6:</b> <b>Observe &amp; Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse or Neglect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff trained to recognize early signs of CAN.</li> <li>• Staff able to work with families having extreme difficulties.</li> <li>• Staff oriented on child welfare reporting guidelines and reporting.</li> <li>• Protocols established for reporting child abuse and neglect.</li> <li>• Filing and reporting.</li> </ul>	<b>50% increase from poor/fair to excellent.</b>
<b>#7:</b> <b>Value &amp; Support Parents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are actively making decisions on child's education.</li> <li>• Staff know parents individually/regularly.</li> <li>• Staff get to know family members by name.</li> <li>• Parents have regular opportunities to participate.</li> <li>• Wednesday Night Family Dinners.</li> <li>• Parents are connected to resources.</li> <li>• Staff Recognize parents' growth and efforts.</li> <li>• Program provides parents opportunities for growth, leadership, and programmatic decisions.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Decreased:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Father involvement programs.</li> <li>• Opportunities for discussions on parenting.</li> </ul>	<b>41% increase from poor/fair to excellent.</b>

## Pilot Site: Rural CAP Child Development Center - Anchorage

(Bold areas indicate program strategies and practices that have demonstrated the greatest area of improvement)

Program Strategies	Practices that Excelled in Past 12 months	Percentage of Improvement (Based on Pre/Post Self-Assessment)
#1: Facilitate Friendships and Mutual Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making information available on activities for parents.</li> <li>• Connecting resources with families.</li> </ul> <p><b>Decreased:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching isolated families.</li> <li>• Modeling positive social skills and community building.</li> </ul>	12% increase from poor/fail to excellent.
#2: Strengthening Parenting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parenting classes.</li> <li>• Take-home materials.</li> </ul> <p><b>Decreased:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for parents to come together.</li> <li>• Cultural expectations and practices about parenting are created.</li> <li>• Parent/Teacher Conferences.</li> <li>• Staff spend time with parents.</li> <li>• Information on developmental challenges.</li> <li>• Staff talk with parents about discipline.</li> <li>• Staff proactively work with parents concerned about their parenting techniques.</li> </ul>	7% increase from poor/fail to excellent.
#3: Respond to Family Crises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program offers small emergency funds for families in crisis</li> <li>• Program maintains resource and referral links</li> <li>• Staff referral process</li> <li>• Connecting families to resources needed</li> </ul> <p><b>Decreased:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents can turn to staff in times of crisis</li> <li>• Staff know how to respond to families in crisis</li> </ul>	25 % increase from poor/fail to excellent.

Program Strategies	Practices that Excelled in Past 12 months	Percentage of Improvement (Based on Pre/Post Self-Assessment)
#4: Link Families to Services & Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in referrals to outside services.</li> <li>• Staff can identify and fill gaps in resources needed for families.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Decreased:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program develops family plans with parents.</li> <li>• Program builds collaborative links.</li> <li>• Parents share information about community resources.</li> </ul>	28% increase from poor/fail to excellent.
#5: <b>Facilitate Children's Social &amp; Emotional Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Use of Social/Emotional development curricula.</b></li> <li>• <b>Parents involved in S/E curricula.</b></li> <li>• <b>Children able to express feelings through words, artwork and expressive play.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff concerns about child's S/E development.</b></li> </ul>	<b>33% increase from poor/fail to excellent.</b>
#6: <b>Observe &amp; Respond to Early Warning Signs of Child Abuse or Neglect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff trained to recognize early signs of CAN.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff able to work with families having extreme difficulties.</b></li> <li>• <b>Staff oriented on child welfare reporting guidelines and reporting.</b></li> <li>• <b>Protocols established for reporting child abuse and neglect.</b></li> </ul>	<b>60% increase from poor/fail to excellent.</b>
#7: Value & Support Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff know parents individually/regularly.</li> <li>• Staff get to know family members by name.</li> <li>• Parents have regular opportunities to volunteer and participate.</li> </ul>	29% increase from poor/fail to excellent.

# 2006 SFI CHALLENGES AND CHANGES

## CHALLENGES

A pilot project wouldn't be a "pilot" without challenges and our sites experienced a few. During the monthly Learning Network teleconferences, there was an opportunity to bring forward the challenges each site was experiencing and then as a group the sites offered support and ideas to help with each challenge. Solutions were always the outcome and successful change was the goal. The following challenges were consistently mentioned and worked on.

There were challenges,

- getting parents to show up for different classes, events, etc. At times there are challenges with parent participation.
- teaching parenting classes using staff with minimal experience. Select training classes and the parent leadership teams have not been well attended.
- creating a close collaboration with the Office of Children's Services personnel.
- prioritizing time and money. There always seems to be so much more we could do for families.
- dealing with staffing shortages, it would help if we had more staff available to carry out the 4 Point Connect Plan. Another challenge is the lack of resources and services for families.
- setting up home visits and then breaking down the barriers and defensiveness that we often encounter. We also have cultural and language differences, and specific family needs that can be challenging, as well as dealing with large range of personalities.
- getting parents past previous school experiences (especially negative ones). Finding ways to get parents excited about participating with school can be difficult at times.
- finding effective ways to work with parents who can be too over-protective, or act in denial about difficult life issues.
- being able to serve everyone and still provide quality care.
- providing support and assistance without overstepping professional boundaries.
- dealing with parents in divorce and during custody disputes.
- training staff to strengthen their understanding of working with families from diverse backgrounds and developing the relationship between teacher and family. Staff training in effective and respectful communication with families is also needed.

Each site experienced program specific challenges, and those are noted below in their own words.

### **Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care**

Most strategies and goals were accomplished. We have not been successful at implementing a parent leadership team. Parents were not interested or would fail to attend consistently.

### **Bristol Bay Native Association**

We were unable to begin parenting classes. We have the curriculum and the personnel but have been unable to get the final steps off the ground. Many Family Advocates are uncomfortable being in a position of teaching parenting, and we have had a hard time getting commitments from community partners to collaborate on this effort. We are slowly getting the pieces pulled together and do still plan on offering parenting support groups in conjunction with other community partners.

### **Juneau Montessori School**

The toll on the school director and/or the lead teachers for the additional responsibility of planning and organizing events, support groups, and/or parenting classes, has been significant.

### **Open Arms Child Development Center**

The intensive four week Connect Plan has become more like a four month Connect Plan! Connections with parents really do work when starting at enrollment and three follow-up connections. Parent Navigators and Parent Coaches are the key to successful connections; it's just finding the time to train and ensure the "fit" between the coach and parent.

### **RuRAL CAP Child Development Center**

The need for staff training to strengthen their understanding of working with families from diverse backgrounds and developing the relationship between teacher and family. Also, training in effective and respectful communication with families is needed.



## CHANGES

All Pilot Sites went into this project with the intention of changing some and/or all aspects of their program toward a more parent engagement model of service. As a part of the training and Learning Network teleconferences, discussion on “what makes effective change” was a clear focus on a monthly basis. The Pilot Sites were all of the understanding that in order to impact change, their formula must read:

<b>Vision + Skills + Incentives + Resources + Action Plan</b>	<b>= Management of Complex Program Changes</b>
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This formula was evidenced time and time again. When certain elements of the formula were absent, definite behaviors were demonstrated. Each of the programs used the formula to suit their individual needs, however, all the programs DID change in many complex and exciting ways.

This section of the report will concentrate on four distinct areas of change that the Pilot Sites encountered and how they responded to this change.

### How has this initiative changed:

#### a. Your children's environment?

- **The Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care** environment has gone through a complete change. The office, the hallways, and classrooms have all been remodeled, rearranged, and redecorated.
- **At Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA)**, staff hope that the children are spending more time with family members in structured activities outside of Head Start. All family members have always been welcome in the classroom and encouraged to participate in the program. SFI has expanded these opportunities to after hours.
- **The Juneau Montessori School** staff have become more sensitive about how their attitude affects their work with each other, the children and their parents. Individual staff members have a better understanding of how important it is to develop good relationships with each family, and in general terms, there is a warmer feeling of care and compassion as well as trust.
- **Open Arms Child Development Center** staff have become more intentional about relationship building with families.
- **RurAL CAP Child Development Center** increased staff awareness as to their role in working with the parents and their interactions with parents at drop-off and pick-up. SFI has helped the children in their care better understand their role in the classroom as a “community of friends,” by building positive relationships with each other and learning positive social interactions. SFI has also made sure the message in the classroom conveys a sense of “community.”

**b. Your parent's attitudes?**

- **The Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care** parents have shown more support and offered increased communication to the staff and administrators. Parents are looking to them for training classes and resources. They have built trust with them and are included in their support network.
- **At BBNA** the parents are having a good time with the socialization events; craft nights seem particularly popular in the Bristol Bay region. Participation is limited to a few families who regularly show up, the majority of families are not participating in the activities. They hope that through word of mouth this will improve.
- **Juneau Montessori School:** By promoting better and more frequent communication between teachers and parents, the Juneau Montessori program parents are more open to communicate their concerns, knowing that they will be listened to. Also, they seem more likely to show their appreciation and respect for all the staff.
- **At Open Arms Child Development Center,** parents are more open and approach staff easier if they have made the initial "4 Point Connect" plan complete by starting with a positive connection.
- **RurAL CAP Child Development Center** parents see the center as a resource for assistance in a variety of needs such as parenting, community resources, and early childhood development information.

**c. Your staff's beliefs?**

- **The Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care** staff feel more comfortable talking with parents. Staff understand and believe in the SFI values. Staff take the extra time to build relationships with the families they work with.
- **The staff at BBNA** are starting to see collaborations with OCS in a different light. They are still skeptical of making joint reports with the families regarding child abuse, but they do see the value in working with parents to increase support systems and provide family fun events.
- **Juneau Montessori School:** Just like the parents, the JMS staff have learned to show their appreciation and respect for all parents.
- **Open Arms Child Development Center** staff have learned that it is better to work on relationships from the start and build a team of cheerleaders for a child so should hard times come, they have a rapport with the family already.
- **RurAL CAP Child Development Center** staff understand that families should be seen as partners with the teachers and the center, and that they serve as positive role models to parents, realizing that a trusting and respectful relationship with families is necessary. Staff more fully understand that each family is unique and individual.

d. **Your program's philosophy?**

- **The Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care** has attempted to include parents and families with the help of the SFI. And through the belief that families and providers need to work together for the benefit of the child, they have moved mountains there.
- **BBNA:** There is value in providing family oriented activities. Many families stay much to themselves in the Bristol Bay area. By providing these opportunities they are teaching the parents that it's ok to discuss child development with other parents. This is generally culturally unacceptable so movement will be slow. There continues to be high turnover in the OCS office at Bristol Bay so that lends itself to difficulties in creating strong, lasting partnerships with this office.
- **The Juneau Montessori School** program has increased the focus on relationship based practices and improved communication.
- **The Open Arms Child Development Center** program needed to rethink how to include more children with difficult behaviors by building in support and access to mental health people and counselors. Creating a community of support around each child has been the philosophical shift for the Open Arms staff.
- **The philosophy at RurAL CAP Child Development Center** is that parents are the key to a successful program and their involvement in their child's school is welcomed. They realize a respectful relationship between caregivers and families can accomplish great things when the partnership works together toward the families' and child's goals. The community is also a key factor in supporting the shared goals and visions of the center and the families.



The following are quotes directly from the Pilot Sites in response to two questions on change.

### **What changes have occurred in your center as a result of being a part of SFI?**

*“Our center has undergone many changes and the SFI has helped us stay focused on what is really important to us – families and children. It has also brought about a need to revisit our current mission, philosophy and values, making sure that the center is not only living by the mission but that the message is observable in the staff, the environment and the atmosphere.”*

*“Our center has undergone many changes and the SFI has helped us stay focused on what is really important to us – families and children.”*

*“There are a lot more evening and weekend activities. We are requiring Family Advocates to provide three monthly events, these can include parenting groups or activities. We hope to expand this as time and funding allows. “*

*“The main change has been our focus on communication and building relationships not only with the families in our program but also with community services that may be helpful to our program or the families we serve.”*

*“Our environment is more welcoming to parents and children.”*

*“Many changes in our environment and atmosphere have happened to our program as a result of the Strengthening Families Initiative. Our environment is more welcoming to parents and children. New families now have a welcoming area to register their children and meet with staff. The staff have worked harder on developing positive relationships with parents. In addition we now hold parenting classes and social events monthly. We have really stepped up the “community nature” of our church and school and how both support each other. New programs include military childcare, and scrapbook nights. There’s an overall feeling that parents are proud of their school, their children and are comfortable participating in activities sponsored by school/church. An element of trust! Parents are more aware of our needs as evidenced by donations, and fundraisers. They team with us when rations are low. “*

## What changes have occurred in your practices as a result of being a part of SFI?

*"We are trying to schedule events that are fun and interesting to the parents. We have always expected a high degree of parental input but now we are able to expand these ideas out of the classroom and someday would love to see them parent led. "*

*"We have become more deliberate during our planned social and/or educational activities to encourage parent communication and relationships."*

*"Our everyday practices have changed. All employees make an extra effort to greet and communicate with parents. All employees have received training on child development, signs of abuse and neglect, challenging behaviors and environments. All employees are given information including the benefits of implementing the SFI model."*

*"All employees make an extra effort to greet and communicate with parents."*

*"The 4 Point Connect Plan, Parent coaching, Wednesday night dinners, Friday evening celebrate recovery dinners; whole team concept of "what is best for the child" – who are the players; child, staff at center, family, specialist. Appreciative listening skills."*

*"The attitudes with staff about the importance of the family's role have been heightened, and the planning of parent teacher conferences with families and possible home visits."*



## LEARNING NETWORKS AND TRAININGS

Once a month, specifically the third Tuesday each month, the Pilot Sites, SFI Coordinator, and the SFI Facilitator all joined together via a Learning Network teleconference. The content of the hour and half of the call was based on one of the protective factors and/or program strategies previously determined by the participants. Prior to the teleconference the SFI Facilitator and the SFI Virtual Assistant researched the topics of interest and provided the Pilot Sites with references, articles, and websites that supported the specific topic. Time was spent reviewing what had been read, going through websites together, and having practical discussions on how the ideas could be implemented into practice.

Time was also spent hearing other people's ideas and learning from them. Many ideas that were discussed in teleconferences have been put into practice at the Pilot Sites. The participants have shared that it is refreshing to listen to a colleague's experience in a wide variety of circumstances, all relevant to the work they do with children. Generally, all the Pilot Sites shared that it's difficult to find the time to seek materials and resources for themselves, the staff, or the parents. The monthly teleconferences provided them with access to resources, current research, and up-to-date early education practices. Even though it may have been difficult to find the time to attend each teleconference, it was an incentive to review the suggested materials.

Often the Pilot Sites had the same questions and concerns. This was where the "meat" of the program practices and challenges occurred. The collaborative nature of the Learning Networks brought new ideas and concepts, and forced each person to think outside the box. They were meant to inspire programs to keep trying, and provided a great springboard for new ideas. Sites felt comfortable expressing new ideas to the group for honest feedback. Much time was spent in support and solution-oriented discussions which in turn promoted learning and interaction with each other. Just like what sites expect from their staff and parents!

The following topics were discussed during the Learning Networks. Each topic was thoroughly researched by the facilitator prior to each teleconference. Journal articles, web-sites, chapters, and general information papers were sent to the Pilot Sites prior to the teleconferences. After reviewing and reading the materials, the teleconference participants were well acquainted with the topic and dialogue was in depth.

According to the Pilot Sites' monthly reviews, there were specific topics that provided more impact and support in their SFI work; these topics are **bolded** below.

## **SFI LEARNING NETWORK TOPICS**

February 2006

- SFI Program Purpose

**March 2006**

- **Value and Support (Engaging) Parents**
- Partnerships Conference

April 2006

- Facilitate Children's Social & Emotional Development

May 2006

- Link Families to Services and Opportunities

**June 2006**

- **Building Program Capacity**

**July 2006**

- **Facilitate Friendships and Mutual support**

August 2006

- Strengthening Parenting

September 2006

- No Learning Network Teleconference

October 2006

- Nutritional Education/Family Meal Time

November 2006

- Social and Emotional/Mental Health Consultation

**December 2006**

- **SFI Summit**



# SFI TRAININGS

On-going and consistent training has been the key to keeping the SFI flame burning. The SFI Coordinator and SFI Facilitator have been available for individual Pilot Site training and observations, and have been used accordingly. As an added bonus, Pilot Sites have sought training outside the “norm” of their training venues. SFI has been the conduit to make this happen. The following are a few of the training opportunities that have been supported by the SFI program.

<p><b>SFI Trainings/Seminars</b> 145 Attendees (included parents)</p>	<p><b>SFI Orientation October 2005</b> 25 Participants</p>	<p><b>SFI Partnership Summit March 2006</b> 300 Participants</p>	<p><b>SFI Summit December 2006</b> 25 Participants</p>
 <p><b>Challenging Behaviors</b> 25 Attendees</p>	 <p><b>Child Development (2 Sites Presented)</b> 27 Attendees/15 Attendees</p>	 <p><b>CPR &amp; First Aid (Offered Twice)</b> 10 Attendees</p>	 <p><b>Child Abuse &amp; Neglect</b> 40 Attendees</p>
<p><b>ECERS/ITERS</b> 35 Attendees</p>	 <p><b>Family/Child Education Night:</b> Dental Health 12 children/17parents</p>	 <p><b>Healthy Lunches</b> 16 Attendees</p>	 <p><b>Nutrition for Young Children</b> Number of attendees not available</p>
<p><b>SIDS &amp; Shaken Baby</b> 40 Attendees</p>	 <p><b>Signing for parents of 0-3 year olds</b> Number of attendees not available</p>	 <p><b>Toddler Behavior</b> 2 Attendees</p>	 <p><b>Toddler Behaviors &amp; Sibling Rivalry</b> 8 Attendees</p>

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SFI PILOT SITES

On a monthly basis, as a part of the Learning Network teleconferences, the Pilot Sites were asked to share their monthly highlights. At the end of the year these highlights have been compiled to represent the day-to-day activities that programs enhanced to include and involve parents.

**Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care** focused their energies on many aspects of program improvement. As stated by Shannan Meyer,

*"Many strategies have been extremely successful. Our environment has completely changed and is now open and welcoming. The parenting and social events have been extremely successful."*

Additional practices implemented by the Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care staff and parents included:

- Parenting classes
- Collaborating with CPS and other agencies/Early Intervention
- Quality childcare programs
- Behavioral Health Support/Worker
- Utilizing students through the university
- Social events with food
- Education and cross-training
- Involving parents in decision making and having them on decision making committees
- Interagency collaboration – GAAP
- More in-house services
- Parent/teacher conferences
- Developmental screenings

**Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA) Head Start program** has been providing parent involvement services through their Head Start program for 15 years. As stated by the SFI staff,

*“Family events have met with varied popularity. Some communities were extremely successful, others were not. Most popular were craft nights, and other fun activities designed for the whole family.”*

The Strengthening Families Initiative enhanced their services to the village communities in the following ways.

- Women's night (a regular in all SFI villages now)
- Hosting Potlucks
- Fund raisers
- Coffee breaks
- Parent/child activities
- Open Gym
- Public dances
- Foster parent recruitment
- Wellness conferences
- Helping foster parents through Head Start system
- Training sessions
- Father involvement
- Cultural activities such as crafts, dance, arts, subsistence

**Needs to sustain our efforts:**

- Parenting classes for grandparents
- OCS parent facilitator or “navigator” type position



**Juneau Montessori School** focused on four critical areas in their SFI practices:

- Parent Night(s) Activities
- Partnership Groups and Connecting with Local Resources
- Early Intervention – Identifying Risk Families
- Responding to Family Crises

*“Staff and families have become much more aware and sensitive to the needs of others. Someone is always ready to help whoever is in need; and it has not necessarily been the same people every time.”*

The ways in which the Juneau Montessori School (JMS) accomplished, and actively practiced these strategies was to:

- **Facilitate friendships & mutual support both among staff members and parents.** Through parent nights where food and childcare were provided, parents and teachers met for parenting classes, group discussions, and informal social gatherings to allow families to get to know each other.
- **Strengthen Parenting** through parenting classes, parent led discussions, and parent/teacher conferences. Staff and parents shared child development information and parenting tips and practices that were age-appropriate.
- **Respond to Family Crisis.** Every time the center had alerted families about someone's specific needs, the response was overwhelming; from cards and flowers, free childcare, meals and transportation, to thousands of dollars collected to cover medical expenses.
- **Link Families to Services and Opportunities.** JMS provided a number of families with initial Mental Health Services for children with social-emotional problems (incompetence, delays, disorders, etc.). They have also been able to respond sooner to parents' and teachers' concerns regarding developmental delays or challenging behaviors.



They have supported homeless families to find affordable housing and obtain housing assistance. Bilingual staff (Spanish speaking and sign language) have served as interpreters when needed.

- **Value & Support Parents.** The JMS promoted parent involvement through activities in the classroom or the school where parents could volunteer for such activities as story time, playground duty, field trip chaperoning, helping with the school's fundraising events, or facilities and equipment maintenance. Teachers expressed their appreciation for parental involvement both verbally and in writing through cards or newsletters. Lead teachers set aside dedicated time to call parents to check-in with them, to share highlights in the child's development, and to encourage communication. Teachers e-mail photos and newsletters to parents on a regular basis. Working on improving communication was one of the major goals the JMS set for their program this year. Some improvement has been made, but they feel there is a need for more consistency and timeliness of the information provided.
- **Facilitated Children's Social & Emotional Development.** This is embedded in the Montessori curriculum. The JMS does an excellent job in this area, however, the Montessori program has limitations and does not seem to be the best setting for children with social-emotional incompetence, particularly when the child is aggressive and lacks the self-control, self-discipline, and self-direction that is expected in large groups such as their classes. The process of self assessing the program has helped them clarify the capabilities and limitations of their program.
- **Observe and respond to early warning signs of child abuse or neglect.** The JMS had a member from the AWARE Shelter come to their program and conduct a training session on this topic for all staff members. Mandatory reporting was also addressed. They feel fortunate that they haven't had any cases, or potential cases, in the last two years.



**Open Arms Child Development Center of Fairbanks** focused their energies on supporting families and strengthening their social/emotional curricula. As stated by Lenetta Colbert,

*“Most successful has been our use of Parent Navigators/Parent Coaches who provide mentors for at-risk families as well as families in crisis. We also partner with Zion (church) for building relationships, counselors, outreach coordinator, and children's ministries who all support our goals at Open Arms. We're building relationships that will last a lifetime. Ours social Functions have been wildly successful and attract literally hundreds of participants to our dinners such as Fall Festival, Back-to-School BBQ, and Spring Fling. We have an outstanding chef!”*

Additionally, the Open Arms staff have enhanced their SFI program with the following events and practices.

- August partnership meeting with OCS/childcare
- CAPTA meeting
- Referrals for CPS childcare
- Sharing information for the benefit of the child
- Wednesday night dinners (130 – 150 attendees)
- Celebrate Recovery dinners – Friday (50 – 60 attendees)
- Asking “child help” questions on registration form
- Saturday meetings/social events/military childcare
- Parent Navigators/Parent Coaches
- Foster parent navigators to biological families



**RurAL CAP Child Development Center of Anchorage** found that by providing the families with time to socialize and get to know not only each other, but the staff as well, was a highlight of this program. As noted by Lisa Danielson,

*"Ice cream socials, presentations by their children and inviting parents to lunch were the most successful strategies we used to engage our families!"*

Additionally, RurAL CAP

- scheduled time with a Mental Health Specialist for families with concerns or general parenting questions.
- provided on-going mental health observations and feedback.
- found the concept of the web-site as intriguing but have had too many technological idiosyncrasies to deal with to get it up and running.
- transitioned to a new center manager, and getting new families and staff on board caused an interruption in the flow of certain projects. For example, they are rebuilding parent committees, establishing relationships and trust with new families, and are re-energizing staff.



## 2006 SFI INNOVATIONS

Throughout the year the project manager and leadership team kept a watchful eye on up and coming promising practices both nationwide and statewide. As a part of the final surveying methods the Pilot Sites were asked about what they felt were innovations, those activities and strategies never before tried (in their community) that had successful outcomes. They shared their innovations in their own words below.

### **Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care**

We have struggled to even get parents through the doors on daily pick-up routines. But by shifting our focus on families and parents' strengths, the staff have become more welcoming and desirous of having the families be engaged in a relationship and partnership with the center. We have done four parent night-out events throughout the year. Parent night-out events are where the staff are available at the center in the evenings and parents have the option to bring their children in for child care while they have a night-out (without the kids). Coupons to events are also drawn, which makes the deal even sweeter! These have been great for the children and parents. Each time we have had over 50 children participate and everyone looks forward to their next time on a night-out!

### **Bristol Bay Native Association**

Women's Night has become a very popular event in our villages. This is a time for nurturing mothers, aunties, grandmothers (elders) together in one setting. We have craft supplies available during this time which doubly enhances the quality of conversation and engagement. We also have "amped" up the number of craft nights, family outings, coffee hours and other family events provided at our centers.



One site is gearing up to begin father involvement activities, led by a group of fathers. Other centers are having regular potlucks and field trips designed to involve the whole family and community.

## **Juneau Montessori School**

We use Yahoo! groups as a means of communication between the school and parents and amongst the parents themselves. We all have access to each other and it is frequently and regularly used. This method of communication has opened up many new avenues for the very busy parent who sometimes cannot physically connect with the center on a daily basis.



We e-mail photos of the children's day to parents, particularly new ones, or whenever the family is having a rough day. With their permission, we send these photos directly to their work or home e-mail. This innovation has become very sought after.

Parents who are medical doctors provide pro-bono medical services to staff (in lieu of health insurance). Each staff member has up to \$600 per year of free medical services from these doctors. Our staff has fully utilized their services and it has proven to be a very healthy year for us all!

## **Open Arms Child Development Center**

For us, the most significant innovation has been intentional connections with families – a 4 Point Connect Plan. It definitely reaps rewards down the road. For example, parents are more supportive of staff – classroom and administration. They talk to all of us as friends and when there is a concern it is much easier to tackle when we already have a relationship. This is huge in a program of 224 children – 192 families!

Other major innovations have been:

1. Marketing message changes: From “Zion invites Open Arms’ families to dinner” to “Open Arms Family Dinners.” This has been a major paradigm shift.
2. Parent Navigators/Parent Coaches. Upon enrollment we offer the parents an opportunity to have a navigator and/or coach. The option is based on the family’s need and intensity of service.
3. Giving every child and family the “Red Carpet” treatment. Believe us, this is truly an effective “new way of being.”

## **RurAL CAP Child Development Center**

Two families were “adopted” for Christmas, receiving gifts from a community business. We have been keeping these families connected through regular communication. We have had the “gift” of a UAA Social Work intern, who will be spending two semesters with our center to increase parent resources, referral, and involvement. Our center is also in the process of the implementation of a developmental screening tool to identify potential delays.

# SUMMIT SYNOPSIS

The fourth specific activity of the Strengthening Family Initiative was for sites to participate in a two day summit (December 4-5, 2006) that involved SFI Pilot Site staff, Office of Children's Services (OCS) representatives from Juneau, Anchorage, Dillingham, and Fairbanks, and other interested local child care organization representatives. The summit was a culmination of a year's worth of work by the Pilot Sites and presented an opportunity to share what they have learned and accomplished, and to develop a collaborative plan with their local OCS partners. It was also an opportunity for local child care programs to learn about the SFI movement which, if and when expansion of SFI occurs, these programs are primed and willing to participate.

The following is a synopsis of the activities and events of the two day summit. The outcome of making connections with new partners was successfully accomplished. An action and follow-up plan for each SFI Pilot Site was completed between the SFI and OCS staff members. The rest is up to each community, program, and family on the partnerships they will sustain and nurture.

## **Participants of the Alaska SFI - OCS/Child Protective Services (CPS) Partners Summit**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>
Leslie Adams	Little Bears Childcare, Girdwood/UAA Student
Lupita Alvarez	SFI - Juneau Montessori School
Laura Averill	Bright Beginnings Childcare/UAA Student
Sarah Bagley	SFI - Boys & Girls Club
Erin Behr	Little Bears Childcare, Girdwood/UAA Student
Matrona Chunak	SFI - BBNA
Lenetta Colbert	SFI - Open Arms, Fairbanks
Michele Green	Bright Beginnings Childcare/UAA Student
Debra Hallmark	OCS/CPS, Bristol Bay
Yvonne L. Hill	OCS/CPS, Fairbanks
Carolyn Hoseth	SFI - BBNA
Gracy Kirkham	Home Childcare/UAA Student
Bernadette Kuchinsky	OCS/CPS, Anchorage
James LaBelle	Social Worker, Cook Inlet Tribal Council
Angie Lantz	BP Child Development Center/UAA Student
Karen Lopez-Johnson	SFI - BBNA
Shannan Meyer	SFI - Boys & Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care
Tatiana Nochevnaya	Tanaina Childcare/UAA Student
Ritchie Sonner	OCS/CPS, Juneau
Brittany Swanson	Practicum Student, UAA
Roger C. Wassillie	SFI - BBNA

## ALASKA SFI CORE VALUES • MISSION • RESULTS

The following Alaska SFI Core Values, Mission, and Pilot Sites Results were developed at the December 2006 Summit through a participant brainstorming session.

### **Alaska SFI Core Values**

- Family
- Respect
- Integrity
- Leadership
- Good Attitude

### **The Strengthening Families Initiative Mission**

*Protecting children by strengthening families.*

### **Pilot Project Results**

Parents will access the support and services they need to care for their children and report feeling supported in increasing their capacity to parent.

ECE programs will recognize their role in preventing child abuse and neglect and implement effective strategies for supporting parents and building protective factors around children.

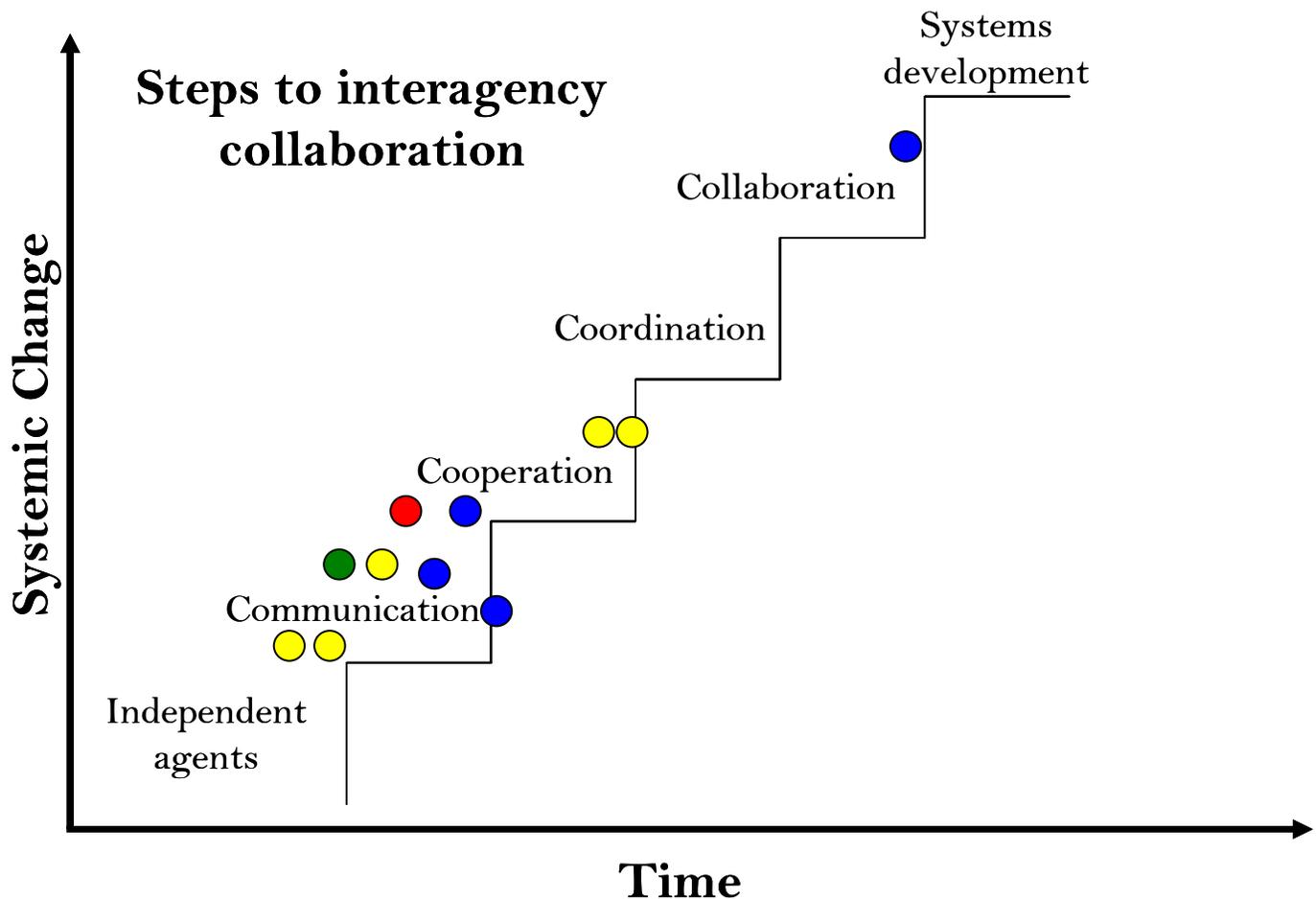
CPS workers will see themselves as members of the prevention team, refer screened out families to community ECE resources, include protective factors in the early assessment of families, and routinely include placement in quality early childhood education programs in service plans for children ages 0-5.



## PARTNERSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS ESTABLISHED THROUGH THE SFI

### Systems Development Process

As a part of the summit, participants learned about the differences in time and energy spent with relationship to how groups and individuals collaborate. The following chart demonstrates where each one of the partners "saw" themselves as collaborators in their communities. The ultimate goal is to all be collaborators, however, the participants understood that more time and energy needs to be placed in working together before true collaboration is mastered.



### Key:

● = Juneau

● = Bristol Bay

● = Fairbanks

● = Southcentral

The effort of systems development and relationship building between service networks and SFI Pilot Sites has been demonstrated by the numbers and variety of service providers the participants have listed as “critical networks for program success.” It is clearly evident that time and energy has been placed in building relationships this past year at all the Pilot Site locations.

The following lists reflect the relationship building efforts between the Alaska SFI Pilot Sites and other service providers in their individual communities.

### **Boys and Girls Clubs Licensed Child Care**

- Child Care Connection
- Office of Children's Services
- Cook Inlet Tribal Council (counseling and child care assistance/placement services)
- Municipality of Anchorage (Child and Adult Care and Child Care Assistance)
- Court Appointed Special Advocates
- Anchorage School District
- Food Bank of Alaska
- Standing Together Against Rape
- Nine Star
- Good Samaritan
- La Leche League
- Denali Family Services
- Women, Infants and Children
- Child Care Assistance
- Catholic Social Services
- Alaska Housing
- Salvation Army

### **Bristol Bay Native Association (BBNA)**

#### Within BBNA

- Workforce Development:
  - Training and Development
  - ATAP/ GA
  - Child Care Assistance
- Social Services:
  - Child Care Center
  - ICWA
  - Early Learning Opportunities
  - TCSW (Tribal Children Service Workers) program

- BBNA Full Board

#### Within Bristol Bay Area Health Cooperation

- Infant Learning Program
- WIC
- Diabetes Prevention
- FASD Diagnostic Team
- Dental Clinic
- Child Advocacy Team
- Bristol Bay Counseling Center

#### Within Bristol Bay Area Health Cooperation (cont)

- Jake's Place (alcohol/ drug recovery program)
- Immunization program
- Health Aides (village based)

#### School Districts/ School District Programs

- Dillingham City School District
- Southwest Region School District
- Bristol Bay Borough School District
- Parents as Teachers

#### Others

- Tribal Councils
- Village/city councils
- Public Health Nursing
- Parents
- Community Members in General

## Juneau Montessori School

- AAIEYC
- AWARE (DV shelter)
- School District
- SDFWA
- Public Health Clinic
- Denali Kid Care (SCHIP)
- WIC
- Infant Learning
- REACH
- Southeast Regional Resource Center
- Legal Services
- Catholic Community Services
- Boy Scouts
- Girl Scouts
- Parks & Recreation
- Big Brothers-Big Sisters
- Juneau Public Libraries

## Open Arms Child Development Center

- CARES—training, evaluation, consultation
- Samaritan Counseling: counseling, referrals, parent/staff education
- ACCA-screening 0 - 3 years
- School District, screening 3 - 10 years
- Office of Children's Services-foster parent connection & worker
- Child Protection Services
- Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

## RurAL CAP Child Development Center

- Programs for Infants and Children, Inc. (ILP)
- Anchorage School District Preschool programs
- University of Alaska Anchorage 's Early Childhood program
- Job Corps' Early Childhood program in Palmer, Alaska
- University of Alaska Social Work Program



## WHERE DO YOU WANT YOUR SFI PROGRAM TO BE IN FIVE YEARS?

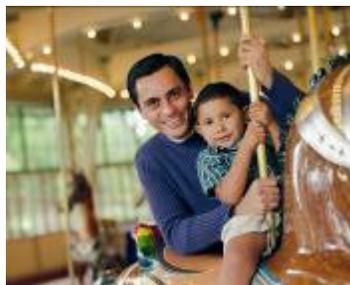
Participants at the December Summit were asked to brainstorm and list responses to the question, "Where do you want your SFI program to be in five years?" The following represents the ideas of that visioning activity.

- Zero tolerance for CAN – community based
- OCS caseload decreased by 50%
- Increase of availability of quality childcare
- More follow up on displaced children
- Appropriate services for every child and family (in-home and childcare)
- More services (comprehensive)
- Hands on prevention from OCS
- In-home service – comprehensive and culturally appropriate
- SFI continued through local agencies in all childcare facilities
- Education/training to staff
- Funding reaches all villages
- Increased salaries for childcare providers who have received SFI training
- Cultural awareness for OCS and childcare providers
- Community buy-in (empowerment)
- Services match the need
- Resources match the need
- All partners participate in individualized services to families
- Reduce kids in custody by 50%
- Each E.C. Center had own CPS worker, mental health professional, etc.
- State law that parents must spend time in child's classroom
- "Take your parent to school" day
- Required parent education classes
- Cross system training/meetings
- Outcomes based on relationship changes
- Media regulations and taxes
- All families eat dinner together!
- CPS kids in the highest quality E.C. programs
- SFI in school districts
- Unlimited SFI funding
- Quality rating system in place for E.C. programs which includes SFI component
- Money for in-home custody cases
- Change vocabulary to be more "friendly"
- Mental health consultants for free
- All E.C. programs are doing SFI
- All Head Starts using SFI
- SFI included in licensing

## THREE TOP PRIORITIES FOR SFI AND OCS/CPS

As an outcome of the brainstorming and round-robin visioning, the participants identified three top priorities for the future of their OCS/CPS and SFI partnerships.

1. Childcare and OCS/CPS in Alaska will reach the Systems Development Stage through involvement in the SFI program.
2. Childcare programs will have an identified, consistent CPS/mental health worker whom they partner and cross-train with (will accept intake rotational screeners as long as they are stable).
3. Widen the SFI model – work to increase prevention piece and strengthen relationship-building between early childhood programs and OCS/CPS statewide. Broaden the SFI network by increasing the number of child care programs included in the SFI movement.



## THREE KEY TOPICS

As a part of the summit, the participants had an opportunity to explore three key topics in a round robin exercise. The questions were:

1. Why involve families in our programs?
2. What ways have we engaged families in our programs?
3. What roles are families playing in our communities (because of their involvement in SFI)?

Following a year of SFI involvement, it was clear that many of the communities were now focusing on families in a different way. Quite interestingly, the responses clearly represented a strong interest and investment in not only encouraging parents, but turning the statements into belief statements.

### Why Involve Families in Our Programs?

- The parents are the experts
- Prevents child abuse and neglect
- The best way to support children is to support their parents
- Most important time to support families is zero to three
- They are the customer
- To make the children feel more comfortable
- Set a positive example for the children
- Builds a stronger program & community
- Use the families as a resource – information/volunteers
- Help support families
- Find out what services the families need/want/desire
- Have a consistent connection between home and school
- Learn their culture
- Build connection that can last after they leave facility
- Share information
- Help support parents
- Lets them know someone cares
- Knowledge of families
- Build "extended" family"
- Parents are the teachers
- Build trust/relationships
- Families are always there...caregivers come and go
- Children learn more with parent involvement
- Parents are role models
- Start a healthy cycle
- Builds stronger social/emotional development
- Children are more successful with family support
- Learn about cultural competence
- Parents are confident in childcare
- Research supports the role of the parent involved
- It shows to parents that "We" are
- To pass on good, constructive criticism
- It is fun and we learn from them
- Passionate about families and others
- Sustain tradition/respect
- It takes a village/community to raise a child
- To help empower the family to succeed and grow
- They complete the circle

## Ways We Have Engaged Families in Our Programs

As a resource list of other options for involving parents in the programs, the SFI Pilot Sites compiled lists of other events that have been popular and somewhat simple to engage parents. Often times, many of these events and activities were parent-led.

- Potlucks
- Social event
- Gym nights/craft nights
- Fundraisers/bazaars
- Ordering classroom materials
- Volunteers in classroom
- Field trips
- Parent meetings
- Home visits
- PT/C
- Daily correspondence
- Online photo sharing
- Chance meetings
- Newsletters/monthly calendars (teachers & admin)
- Community board
- Parent trainings
- Committee work
- Resources
- Parent co-op opportunities (networking/get-togethers)
- "Sand day" – parent service activities
- E-mail/chat online
- Parent coach & navigators
- Staff & parent trainings (together)
- Family nights
- Holiday activities
- Share their expertise
- Donations from other stores given to parents
- End of the day notes
- Developing relationship with parents
- Open Door policy
- Posting pictures
- Family tree
- Donations
- Family parties
- Lending library
- Lending toys/book for kids
- Book orders
- Parent volunteers for fundraisers
- Late night phone calls
- E-mail messages
- Finding assistance
- Extended family volunteers
- Trike-a-thon fundraisers
- Cultural activities – teaching/sharing
- Community outreach project
- Open up board meetings to parents
- Food program – parent donations
- Room parent (room mother)
- Gift certificate to use for parent incentives
- Sewing/mending
- Door prizes galore!

## **Roles That Families (Involved in SFI) Play in our Communities**

Yet another avenue that the summit participants ventured in to was to explore how families in their programs are involved in their individual communities. As recognized in much of the research, families involved in communities at any level will have a much stronger level of connection and a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect. Below are roles parents at the Alaska SFI Pilot Sites have played in their communities.

- PTA
- Scouts
- Parent run ski clinics
- Community school
- Being coaches
- Road clean-up/clean-up day
- Food drive
- Angel tree
- Free cycle
- Red Cross
- Angel Tree
- Church activities/fundraisers
- Rotary Club
- Crash rescue teams
- Work in the community
- Share hobbies at craft fairs
- Fundraisers
- United Way Day of Giving
- Community potlucks
- Families are the community/create who we are
- Teaching next generations/traditions/values
- Volunteering!
- Working together for goals
- Donations
- Supporting tragedies/positive events
- Support for teachers
- Radio/cable advertisement opportunities
- Fur Rondy/Open Houses
- Village Councils/City Councils
- Cultural events, meetings, dances, etc.
- Development committee
- School/borough
- Lunch at the center
- P/T meetings
- Volunteer presenters
- Agency presenters to children and teachers
- Arts and art communities
- Fairbanks Clean-Up Day
- Runs, marathons, fundraisers
- Different non-profit boards
- Christmas/holiday programs

## EXPANDING THE SFI PROGRAM

The final activity of the summit was an open brainstorm session where participants were free to explore new ways to expand the Alaska SFI Program (even if there is no funding). The participants eagerly supported promoting the SFI movement and were committed to sustaining the efforts that have been made over the past year. It was clear from the participants' standpoint that the SFI program strategies they have experimented with may be the very KEYS that truly "break the cycle of abuse and neglect." As this report has pointed out, many of the SFI program strategies have become standardized in the SFI Pilot Sites' policies and procedures, supported by their administration, and embraced by their communities.

### **SFI IN ALASKA HAS MADE AN ENORMOUS DIFFERENCE!**

#### **Ways to Expand the SFI movement in Alaska**

- May: Key Alaska Representatives attend National Conference on SFI.
- Discuss with community and gain community consensus on supporting the SFI movement.
- Tap providers in communities outside of ECE.
- Take smaller steps; take what has worked and replicate in our smaller villages.
- Parent (involved in SFI Pilot Sites) head committee on marketing.
- Pilots adopt the SFI and actually have a proclamation which documents this adoption!
- We need 600 groups!!!!
- Training seminars on SFI at every conference throughout the state. All Pilot Site staff and parents should be involved at conferences.
- Show the real costs of implementing SFI.
- One resource to pull it all together!
  - Directory
  - Website
  - Alaska Related
  - Manual on the web
- Get Consumers involved and committed.
- Toot our own horn!
- Target new audiences.
- Go on other websites – T/A [www.cssp.org](http://www.cssp.org).
- Institutionalize the Learning Networks on a monthly basis.
- All SFI programs receive direct support from Mental Health Consultant or have direct access to a consortium of Mental Health workers.