

Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening & Support Program Self-Assessment

The Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening & Support were developed by the California Network of Family Strengthening Networks in 2012 with input from almost 1,000 diverse family support and strengthening programs and adopted by the National Network of Family Support and Strengthening Networks in 2013. The Standards advance the field by defining a shared understanding of quality practice built on common values, just as other such as education, childcare, and health care fields have done.

The Standards illustrate how the Principles of Family Support Practice and the Strengthening Families™ five protective factors can be integrated programmatically. These Standards establish common measures for quality practice while allowing for a tremendous diversity of strategies, approaches, and organizational structures. They may be used across a broad range of community-based programs, including family resource centers, home visiting programs, and early care and education programs.

The Program Self-Assessment Tool is part of a free suite of materials used for implementing the Standards. Designed as a critical thinking exercise, it provides an opportunity to reflect upon and develop concrete plans for enhancing the quality of practice on an ongoing basis. Programs are encouraged to conduct an assessment with the tool annually.

The five key areas are listed to the right. The self-assessment is designed to be completed by program teams comprised of managers, direct service staff, parent leaders, and other stakeholders as appropriate. The National Network recommends that all team members be trained on the Standards first. The team indicates how well the program is implementing each standard and its accompanying indicators by documenting specific examples. The tool provides a developmental map for programs interested in establishing that they are in alignment with the fundamental approach to family support and strengthening. It also provides a path for organizations interested in deepening and strengthening specific practice elements.

Teams may choose to complete the entire tool during a one-day retreat or to reflect on individual sections during a series of staff meetings. Funders might require programs to complete it annually. Networks may require, as a criteria of membership, use of the tool on a regular basis. Visit the California Network of Family Strengthening Networks website at www.cnfsn.org to download the Standards and implementation tools and for more information.

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Five key areas of practice are identified, each with associated standards, indicators, and implementation examples. The five sections are:

Family Centeredness

A family-centered approach that values and recognizes families as integral to the Program

Family Strengthening

Using a family strengthening approach to support families to be strong, healthy, and safe, thereby promoting optimal development

Embracing Diversity

Acknowledging and respecting families' diversity, supporting their participation in a diverse society, as well as engaging in ongoing learning and adaptation to diversity

Community Building

Contributing to building a strong and healthy community by facilitating families' social connections, developing leadership skills, and collaborating with other Programs

Evaluation

Looking at Program strengths and areas for further development, in order to guide continuous quality improvement and achieve positive results for families

A Pathway to Quality Improvement

Within these five areas, 17 standards are described with indicators of minimum quality, which are foundational, and high quality, which represent deeper integration of the standard.

To reach high quality in the first four sections, programs must demonstrate formal structure, staff training, or family partnership in the implementation of a Standard. To move from minimum to high quality in the evaluation section, data analysis, sharing evaluation results, program modification, or training for evaluation integration are needed.