

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES FOR THE FUTURE (SFF)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

October 2006

1. What is the Strengthening Families for the Future (SFF)?

Strengthening Families For the Future (SFF) is a family based prevention program for elementary school aged children between the ages of 7 – 11 (and their parents) who may be at risk for substance abuse, depression, violence, delinquency and school failure.

The program is fourteen sessions in length. A booster or review session is also included. Each session begins with a family dinner, followed by separate one-hour sessions for parents and children and ends with a fifty-minute family session.

A program coordinator administers SFF and program facilitators implement each session. Childcare workers take care of the younger children from participant families. Volunteers can assist in many ways depending on the program's needs, e.g. meal preparation, childcare, session implementation.

2. Who is SFF intended for?

As indicated above, the SFF program is designed for elementary school aged children between the ages of 7 – 11 (and their parents) who may be at risk for substance abuse, depression, violence, delinquency and school failure. The children's risks of these problems may be due in part to their parents' substance use and/or mental health problems.

SFF can also serve as a primary prevention program for any family.

3. What does a SFF look like? What are the objectives of the SFF?

The SFF program is fourteen sessions in length. Each session begins with dinner, followed by separate one-hour sessions for parents and children and ends with a fifty-minute family session.

The purpose of SFF is to promote resilience in children and to prevent substance abuse, depression, violence and school failure by achieving the following objectives:

- To improve family communication, family organization and planning
- To improve parenting skills by increasing positive attention and praise, increasing parental empathy for the child and increasing effective discipline

- To improve children's skills by increasing communication and problem solving, developing peer resistance skills and reducing intention to use alcohol and or other drugs.

4. Who administers a SFF?

There are various models of administering and/or delivering Strengthening Families for the Future. One model could be one social agency that serves children taking responsibility for all aspects of administering and implementing a SFF program.

An ideal model is a coalition of children's services and agencies forming a partnership or coalition to oversee, direct and deliver the program. Within the coalition, member agencies provide the staff, monetary and or other resources that are required to implement a successful program.

5. What staffing is required to operate a SFF program?

One person who has experience administrating a program like SFF would be assigned by the lead agency to act as the SFF coordinator. The coordinator's role includes SFF promotion, participant recruitment, session coordination, meal planning, program maintenance and troubleshooting etc.

Four SFF program facilitators lead the sessions, two facilitators for the child sessions, and the second pair for the parent sessions. All four facilitators come together to implement the family sessions. Of the four facilitators, two facilitators lead the family session each week, while the remaining two offer support during the session.

A childcare worker is needed to provide childcare for children less than seven years of age.

If available, volunteers form part of the staffing team for matters like meal preparation and transportation.

6. How are SFF family participants recruited?

Participants can be recruited in a number of ways. They could be recruited directly from social agency caseloads. Alternatively, the SFF program could be promoted (advertised) within the community. For example, a promotional program flyer, as part of an advertising campaign, could be developed and distributed.

7. Where does a SFF program sessions take place?

Typical locations or sites for Strengthening Families for the Future include religious group buildings that have kitchens and program space (e.g. a church, synagogue or mosque) and community centres. Some social agencies have suitable space.

Program space includes three meeting rooms: one for parent sessions, one for the children sessions and a room for childcare.

What is important is to maximize program participation by making the program space physically and psychologically accessible.

8. How many SFF sessions are there?

The program is fourteen sessions long. A booster or review session is also included in the program. SFF providers may choose to offer the booster session several months after completion of the 14th session.

During the development of SFF and during the research phase, it was found that the majority of families completed all 14 sessions.

9. How long is each SFF session?

For program participants, each session runs for approximately three hours, e.g. 5:00pm – 8:00pm. For staff, time is needed immediately after the third hour for de-briefing, and clean up.

10. What does the group format of a SFF session look like?

A SFF program group consists of up to ten families. Each session follows the same format: warm up, skills demonstration, practice, wrap up and home work.

11. What preparation is required of the staff for each SFF session?

An hour is usually sufficient time for the facilitators to prepare for each session.

12. Is there an SFF manual?

The Strengthening Families For the Future Resource consists of four manuals:

Getting Started Manual
Parent Manual
Child Manual
Family Manual

The Getting Started manual was written for the program coordinator. It provides details on setting up, recruiting participants and implementing the SFF program. Sample forms and letters are provided.

The Child, Parent and Family user-friendly manuals were written for the program facilitators. They provide precise details for organizing and conducting each program session. These manuals include reproducible handouts. The handouts are also provided in French.

13. What does the SFF manual cost and how do I order it?

The cost is \$90.00 (plus G.S.T. and shipping). Order the resource at <http://www.camh.net/publications/> or please call marketing at: 1.800.661.1111 or 416.595.6059.

14. How much does it cost to operate a SFF program?

Operational costs (other than staffing) are about \$5,000.00 per program. These costs include recruitment and promotion, supplies and materials, meals and snacks, incentives for family participation, family transportation.

15. Who and how was the SFP developed?

Dr. Karol Kumpfer from the University of Utah developed the Strengthening Families Program in the mid-1980s.

The materials have been adapted to the Canadian context by relying on the input of community agencies who participated in pilots and the research.

16. Has SFF been evaluated? What are the results?

The evaluation of the SFF has recently been completed. Preliminary results show that Strengthening Families for the Future is a promising intervention for fostering significant improvements in family functioning, parenting, and children's psychosocial functioning.

17. Is the SFF considered to be a best practice program?

Yes, Strengthening Families For the Future is cited as a Best Practice Program in Health Canada's Compendium of Best Practices – "Preventing Substance Use Problems Among Young People".

18. Is training available for agency staff that intend to implement the program?

The Centre for Addiction and Mental will be offering training for communities that implement the SFF.

19. Is any financial assistance available for individual agencies or community Coalitions that intend to implement the SFF?

A small subsidy will be available for some individual agencies or community coalitions. An application/proposal form will have to be completed. The money is intended to defray program costs. (See number 14)

20. Who can be contacted directly to learn more about the SFP?

Contact your local Centre for Addiction and Mental Health office to learn more about Strengthening Families For the Future.