

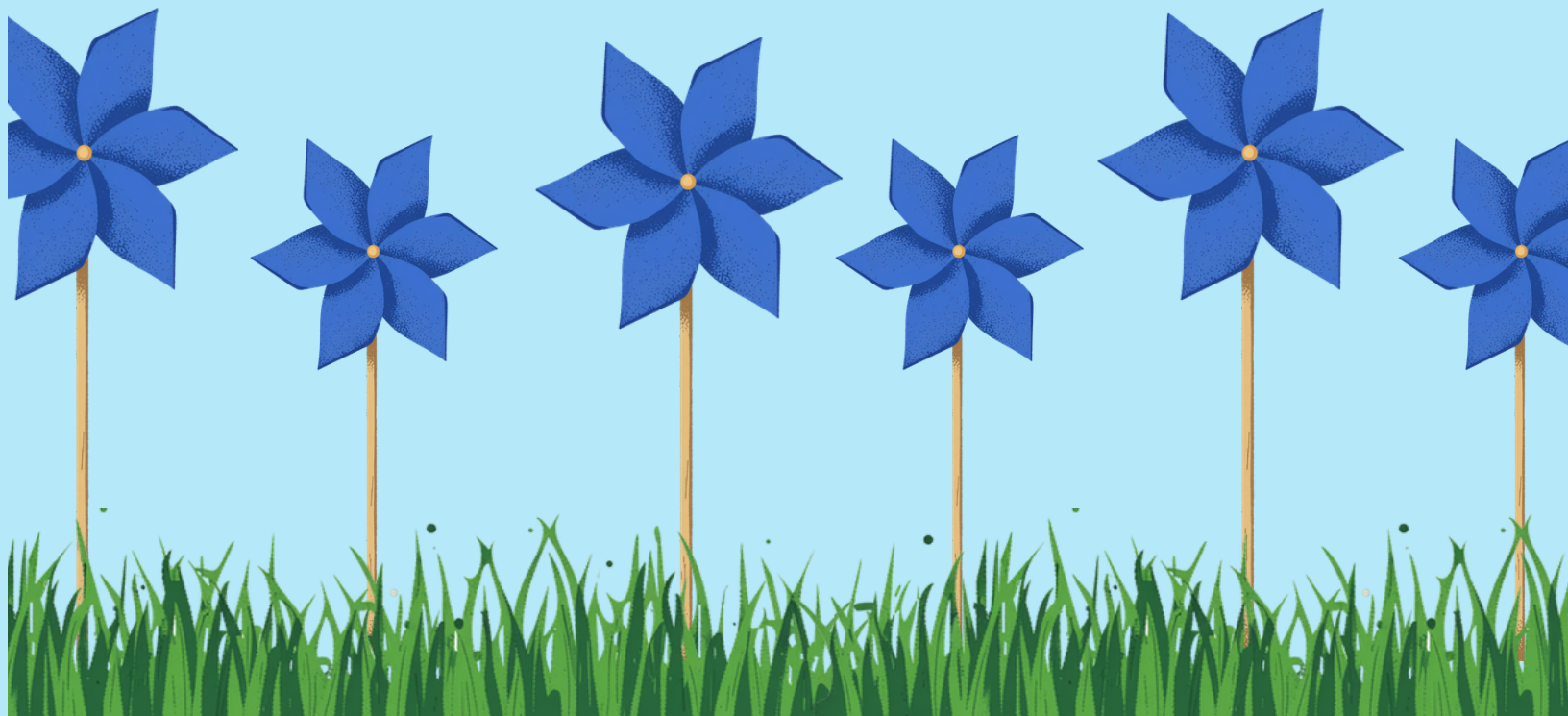


Strengthening Families Month

Idaho 2026

Community Engagement Toolkit

**Building Protective Factors • Strengthening Communities • Preventing
Child Abuse and Neglect**



Welcome to Strengthening Families Month



Welcome to Strengthening Families Month! The purpose of this campaign is to celebrate families, promote the Five Protective Factors that help children thrive, and shift the conversation toward proactive child abuse prevention. This effort is championed by the Idaho Children's Trust Fund (ICTF), an organization dedicated to providing funding, training, and technical assistance to community-based programs working to prevent child abuse and neglect across the state.

Campaign Goals

- **Raise Awareness:** Educate communities that early support prevents child neglect by intervening before stress becomes a crisis.
- **Promote PCEs:** Focus on positive childhood experiences to drive healthy development and buffer children against toxic stress.
- **Foster Connection:** Cultivate shared responsibility and partnerships so families can access vital social and concrete supports

About Strengthening Families Month

Nationally, April is recognized as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Idaho observes this important time through **Strengthening Families Month**. This name change intentionally shifts our focus away from what we want to stop (child abuse and neglect) and instead highlights *how* we prevent it: by proactively strengthening families and communities before a crisis occurs.

Who Leads This Effort

This statewide campaign is a collaborative, community-driven effort led by:

- **Idaho Children's Trust Fund**
- **Prevent Child Abuse Idaho**
- **Regional partners and Hub leaders**, who are the true drivers of the month's activities, coordinating local events, pinwheel displays, and outreach across Idaho's communities.

Strong families build strong communities. By working together, we can create environments where all children and families can thrive.

Connection is Prevention: Our Shared Role in Strengthening Families

To truly support children, we must change how our society supports families. That starts with a mindset shift, from a culture that focuses on individual parental blame and reacting to crises, to one of collective responsibility that proactively builds community support, trust, and connection. When families are valued and supported by their communities, child abuse and neglect prevention becomes possible.

By working together, we can build a strong prevention ecosystem across Idaho. Communities that respond early, meet families where they are and lead with compassion and practical support.

Why Strong Families Matter:

The decisions we make today shape future generations. Children flourish in safe, stable, and nurturing environments. These environments, supported by positive childhood experiences, are essential for healthy brain development and lifelong well-being.

Families do not thrive in isolation. Economic stability, safe housing, and strong community ties are vital. Communities must invest in supporting families to foster environments where children can thrive.

Moving Beyond the Crisis Response

Parents and caregivers often face overwhelming challenges. When families become overloaded by stressors like financial strain, housing instability, or social isolation, caregivers can become weighed down in their ability to provide the supportive relationships children need.

Current policies and systems often intervene too late, waiting for crises rather than offering early support. This lack of accessible resources increases stress on families, making it difficult to shield children from its negative effects.

How We Strengthen Families Together

Preventing child abuse and neglect is a shared responsibility. It requires collaboration across various sectors. Communities can work to promote the Five Protective Factors to buffer against stress and aid families:

- **Social Connections:** Foster spaces for parents to build positive relationships and reduce isolation.
- **Concrete Support:** Ensure easy access to necessities and services before crises arise.
- **Parenting Knowledge:** Provide resources and education to help parents understand child development.
- **Parental Resilience & Social-Emotional Competence:** Offer supportive environments for parents and children to manage stress and emotions.

The Path Forward: Investing in Possibility

Research shows that strengthening these protective factors and ensuring positive early conditions can prevent stress's harmful effects. Investing early in families is more effective and less costly than crisis intervention. By partnering with parents and removing barriers, we can create a supportive ecosystem where families thrive, benefiting all of Idaho.

Participation Guide for Strengthening Families Month

Everyone has a role to play in building positive childhoods and strengthening families. Whether you have five minutes or five hours, here are some of the best ways you, your school, or your organization can get involved this April:

Show Your Support (Visibility & Awareness)

- **Plant Pinwheels:** Place a pinwheel garden on your lawn or a community fence.
- **Decorate:** Paint windows with pinwheel art and messages of resilience.
- **Wear Blue:** Join the statewide Wear Blue Day on April 8th, or wear blue every Wednesday.
- **Request a Proclamation:** Ask local leaders to officially recognize the month.

Learn & Connect (Events & Education)

- **Host a Training:** Schedule an evidence-based session like HOPE 101 or The Brain Architecture Game for your staff or parents.
- **Organize an Event:** Plan a family game night, art contest, or a "Parent Café" to build local connections.
- **Offer Your Space:** Provide your business or organization's facility for family-friendly activities.

Spread the Word (Digital Engagement)

- **Post Online:** Share photos of your participation or tips on the 5 Protective Factors and HOPE.
- **Take the Challenge:** Record a "Pass the Pinwheel" video sharing why families matter and tag a friend.
- **Add to the Calendar:** Submit your events to the statewide Strengthening Families Month calendar.
- **Use the Hashtags:** Include these in every post: #IdahoStrengtheningFamilies #PinwheelsForPrevention #IDWearBlue

Give Back (Community Support)

- **Sponsor:** Businesses and individuals can [donate funds](#) or raffle prizes to support local family events.
- **Volunteer:** Help with setup, cleanup, or photography at community gatherings and Parent Cafés.
- **Day of Giving on April 28:** Contributions benefit the programs, policies, and everyday acts of care that strengthen families and help them thrive.

Idaho SFM 2026 Campaign Resources

This resource hub provides tools to help you participate in Strengthening Families Month 2026 and promote strong families in your community. These resources are designed to support outreach, engagement, and activities that build positive childhood experiences.

Get Involved & Register Events

Use these links to officially join the statewide campaign and add your local activities to the master calendar.

- **SFM Participation Interest Form:** Let us know how your organization plans to participate. [Get Involved](#)
- **Submit Your Event to the Statewide Calendar:** Use this form to feature your Parent Cafés, youth activities, pinwheel plantings, or family nights on the official ICTF calendar. [Submit your event here](#)
- **ICTF SFM Webpage:** Your main landing page for statewide updates and resources. [Idaho Children's Trust Fund Strengthening Families Month](#)
- **Sector Participation Toolkit:** Targeted one-pagers for Schools, Libraries, Businesses, and Service Providers that explain how each sector naturally builds the 5 Protective Factors. [How Your Organization Strengthens Families](#)

Media & Press Toolkit

Engage local journalists with solutions-oriented templates that emphasize that child abuse and neglect are preventable.

- **Media Templates Folder:** A single link containing the General Press Release, Event-Focused Release, and the Media Advisory. [Media Template Folder](#)
- **Key Messages & Soundbites:** A "cheat sheet" using the overload metaphor to explain family stress and talking points on Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs). [SFM Messaging Guidelines](#)

Social Media & Visual Assets

Maintain a consistent visual identity with these customizable tools.

- **Social Media Content Suite:** Includes the April Content Calendar and the Posting Guidelines/Hashtag Guide (#IdahoStrengtheningFamilies). [Social Media Toolkit](#)
- **The "Pass the Pinwheel" Video Challenge Guide:** Step-by-step instructions and sample scripts to help your team and community film short, engaging videos for social media using the hashtag #IDPassthePinwheel. [Pass the Pinwheel Scripts](#)
- **Prevent Child Abuse America Branding & Visuals:** Access high-resolution PCAA logos and customizable campaign posters for your lobby or storefront. [PCAA Materials](#)

Training & Education

Bring evidence-based prevention education to your staff or community.

- **Request a Training (Google Form):** Use this form to request a facilitator for HOPE 101, The Brain Architecture Game, or Stewards of Children. [Request a Training](#)
- **Training Opportunities Flyer:** A downloadable flyer explaining our available 2026 trainings and how to request them. [Learn About Our Trainings](#)

Family Activities & Display Guides

Printable materials designed for direct engagement with children and parents.

- **Family Activity Kit:** Downloadable coloring pages (grounded in HOPE), DIY pinwheel craft instructions, and curated book lists for families. [SFM Activities Folder](#)
- **Wear Blue Day Downloads:** Posters and flyers for [Idaho Wear Blue Day](#) (Wednesday, April 8th) and [Wear Blue Wednesdays](#) throughout April.
- **Visual Display Inspiration:** Creative examples of Pinwheel Gardens, window paintings, and other Strengthening Families Month displays to spark your own local projects. [Display Examples](#)

[Donate to Support Strengthening Families Month](#)



Messaging for Strengthening Families



Goal: To shift the public conversation from individual blame and crisis response toward collective responsibility and proactive prevention.

The Do's: What to Emphasize

Focus on these core pillars to build hope and engagement within the community.

- **Lead with Resilience and Hope:** Frame negative outcomes as avoidable. Use the "Counterbalance" concept: early adversity is heavy, but positive supports can tip the scale back toward health.
- **Frame as a Collective Responsibility:** Use "we" and "us" language. Remind the audience that strong families aren't built in isolation; they are built through community investment and cross-sector partnerships.
- **The "Overload" Metaphor:** Explain neglect through the lens of external stress. Just as a truck can be overloaded by too much weight, families can be overloaded by poverty, lack of childcare, or housing instability.
- **Highlight Brain Plasticity:** Use probabilistic language. Instead of saying the brain is "damaged," say development is "disrupted." This emphasizes that with the right support, healing and adaptation are always possible.
- **Provide Concrete Solutions:** Give people a "map" of what prevention looks like (e.g., family resource centers, affordable childcare, or community mentoring).

The Don'ts: What to Avoid

Avoid these common pitfalls that trigger "tuning out" or negative stereotyping.

- **Don't Center on Reporting:** While reporting is a safety net, it isn't prevention. Focus "upstream" on the resources that prevent the need for a report in the first place.
- **Don't Trigger the "Family Bubble":** Avoid suggesting that a child's well-being is only the responsibility of the parents. This makes people ignore the role of policy and community.
- **Don't Hunt for "Bad Apples":** Stay away from stories that focus on a single "villain." When we blame "sick people," the public feels the problem is unpredictable and therefore unfixable.
- **Don't Lean on Fatalism:** Highly graphic stories or "scare tactics" lead to compassion fatigue. If the problem looks too big to fix, people will stop trying to help.
- **Don't Use Deterministic Language:** Never make it sound like a child's future is "ruined" by their past. Resilience is a lifelong process.

The "Reframing" Cheat Sheet

Use this table to quickly audit your social media posts, press releases, or newsletters.

Avoid This (The Barrier)	Try This (The Bridge)
"Toxic stress damages the brain."	"Toxic stress disrupts healthy brain development."
"What happens behind closed doors is what matters."	"Children thrive when they are supported by parents, educators, and neighbors."
"Neglect is common in impoverished families."	"Neglect is more likely when families experience an overload of stress."
"Child abuse is a horrific, lifelong tragedy."	"We have a shared obligation to foster every child's tremendous promise."
"If you see something, report it."	"Let's build support networks so families have what they need before a crisis."

Approved Graphic Elements & Brand Guidelines

To keep our statewide message unified, please follow these simple rules when creating materials or using the toolkit templates:

- **Keep it Blue:** Blue is our primary color, representing possibility and strength. When using provided templates, do not change the background colors.
- **Use Pinwheels Positively:** The pinwheel is the national symbol for happy, healthy childhoods. Never pair pinwheel images with scary statistics, graphic content, or fear-based messaging.
- **Add Your Logo Properly:** Add your organization's logo to the designated co-branding spaces, alongside the Idaho Children's Trust Fund and Prevent Child Abuse Idaho logos. Never stretch, distort, or recolor any logos.
- **Stick to the Layout:** When using the provided Canva templates, you are encouraged to type in your own local event details, but do not change the fonts, locked photos, or overall layout structure.

Reframed Key Facts & Data Points

Instead of sharing graphic statistics about abuse, use these data points to prove that solutions work:

- **Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) build resilience:** Research shows that Positive Childhood Experiences actually buffer the effects of toxic stress. In fact, adults who report having 6 to 7 positive childhood experiences have a 72% lower risk of depression or poor mental health, even if they faced early adversity.
- **The 5 Protective Factors prevent harm:** Child abuse and neglect are preventable when communities actively help families build the Five Protective Factors: Parental Resilience, Social Connections, Knowledge of Parenting, Concrete Support, and the Social and Emotional Competence of Children.
- **Concrete support reduces risk:** When families face severe financial hardship, it sets the stage for more stress and less tuned-in interaction with children. Providing concrete community supports—like access to food pantries, affordable childcare, or housing assistance—relieves that pressure and directly reduces the likelihood of child neglect