

# KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION BRIEF

## Best Practice Lenses Used in Family Strengthening Work



When you consider human nature, why do you believe people think, feel, behave, and interact the way they do? Do all humans share common responses, or are we unique in how we operate in the world? We often have our own explanations based on our individual experiences, circumstances, and cultural contexts. The tools we use to come to an understanding of the world around us are referred to by some as “lenses.” Different perspectives of the same situation can be produced depending on what “lens” we use, be it reading glasses, binoculars, or a kaleidoscope. Many fields of practice have well-defined lenses that provide a common language to make sense of what we see and experience, to help practitioners organize and efficiently apply their skills and tools.

Family strengthening workers have many working tools available to help them see and understand a family’s situation clearly: empathy, genuineness, respect, cultural humility, values, etc. A lens is meant to magnify or correct vision giving us a clear, accurate picture. In family strengthening practice, it matters what kind of lens you look through.

Strategies 2.0 utilizes four best practice lenses throughout our work to better support the effectiveness of the family strengthening field. We apply these lenses across our curriculum and service pathways to increase worker effectiveness in the field. We support family strengthening workers to expand their understanding of the work by examining common scenarios through a series of lenses often used in human services. By considering the same situation in many different ways, participants are better prepared to respond effectively to meet the complex needs of families in an individual way.

The four best practice lenses for family strengthening workers include the following:

Trauma-Informed Care	Cultural Proficiency
<p>This lens acknowledges that there are multiple kinds of trauma, that trauma is very common and can happen to anyone, and that people who have experienced trauma require sensitive responses to avoid re-traumatization. Trauma-informed workers use this knowledge to guide their work with families, while trauma-informed organizations integrate this knowledge into their policies and procedures (SAMHSA, 2014).</p>	<p>This lens is based on the belief that all people hold unique cultural identities that help determine how we navigate our lives. Culturally proficient professionals recognize that different cultural groups have different needs and values, and they in turn respect, celebrate, and effectively respond to these differences. Workers using this lens also strive to understand how their own cultural identity influences their work (Lindsey, Robins, &amp; Terrell, 2009).</p>
Strengths-Based Approach	Equity
<p>This lens maintains that people and families have existing strengths and resources making them capable of addressing their own challenges. Professionals using this lens partner with families rather than acting as an expert, helping them to identify, utilize, and build on their strengths. They also recognize that many circumstances could be seen as strengths, such family routines and willingness to seek help (Hammond, 2010).</p>	<p>This lens recognizes that disparities in opportunity exist between social groups and some have advantages over others. Equity-minded workers identify and challenge these disparities, provide tailored support to help families overcome barriers, and encourage them to advocate for their inclusion in the community and ability to access resources (CSSP, 2019).</p>

For family strengthening professionals and other human services workers, it is important to recognize one's tendency to view others in a particular way and how that might affect one's work. Though the above lenses provide guidance, many other factors may converge to influence our worldview, and building one's awareness is an essential step towards supporting families as effectively as possible.

## Take Action

- 1) Reflect on the common beliefs you hold and use when working with families as well as where these beliefs come from. Consider how these beliefs impact your work with families.
- 2) Examine your organization and what lenses guide its policies and practices. If none is used, work with others in your agency to determine if applying a lens, such as trauma-informed care, might improve your effectiveness.
- 3) Sign up for Strategies 2.0 trainings to learn more about how to apply different lenses to your family strengthening work. Find out more at [StrategiesCA.org/trainings](https://StrategiesCA.org/trainings).

## Resources

Developing Culturally Responsive

Approaches to Serving Diverse Populations: A Resource Guide for Community-Based Organizations – Provides links to tools and resources to improve cultural proficiency

<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/kb/cultcomp/Developing%20Culturally%20Responsive%20Approaches%20to%20Serving%20Diverse%20Populations-2017.pdf>

Strengths in Families Worksheet – A checklist for family strengthening workers to identify the strengths of a family they work with.

[https://casaswmoorg.presencehost.net/file\\_download/ce84ea45-a1a8-4371-9958-919a15dac9c0](https://casaswmoorg.presencehost.net/file_download/ce84ea45-a1a8-4371-9958-919a15dac9c0)

## References

Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). (2019). Equity in early childhood systems: A community action brief. Retrieved from <https://cssp.org/resource/equity-in-early-childhood-system/>

Hammond, W. (2010). Principles of strengths-based practice. Retrieved from <https://greaterfallsconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Principles-of-Strength-2.pdf>

Lindsey, R.B., Robins, K.N., & Terrell, R.D. (2009). Cultural proficiency: A manual for school leaders. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

SAMHSA. (2014). SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach. Retrieved from <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4884.pdf>

The logo for Strategies 2.0 features a stylized green leaf with an orange dot above the text "Strategies 2.0" in a blue, sans-serif font.

## Strategies 2.0

Strategies 2.0 is a multi-dimensional initiative to help professionals and organizations make a bigger impact.

We train, support, and link professionals and organizations together to more effectively support families as well as build power to advance equity and opportunity in our communities.

