



Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection
Operation Strong Families

In April 2012, the Director of the Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection received an email that originated from the Chief of Naval Operations and was sent to all naval administration. This email focused on child abuse prevention month, promoting protective factors to support resiliency and military families, and encourage personnel to attend seminars and workshops. In May 2012, the Director read an article about the U.S. Marine Corps efforts to head off an anticipated spike in the number of child abuse and child neglect incidents associated with post-deployment stress and family reunification.

A connection between the military's efforts to support resiliency and families by incorporating the *Strengthening Families* protective factors and the work associated with *Florida's Child Abuse Prevention and Permanency Plan: July 2010 – June 2015* was realized. This plan seeks to build the capacity for Floridians to prevent child maltreatment before it ever occurs. To do this, Florida's child maltreatment prevention strategies focus on building resilience in Florida's families through the protective factors to achieve the overarching goal of "All families and communities ensure that children are safe and nurtured and live in stable environments that promote well-being." This connection led to the creation of the Operation Strong Families initiative.

Operation Strong Families is a statewide initiative focusing on the strengths and connections within Florida's families and communities. The goal of this initiative is to support military families beginning with the families of our American Heroes, the men and women of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, National Guard, Coast Guard, and Reserves, through coordinated efforts to build on protective factors and enhance community capacity. Community connections are the linchpins in supporting military families. Community and family resilience is influenced by strong informal networks that occur among friends, family members, work associations and neighbors. To help facilitate this, volunteers will be enlisted to serve as a Civilian Battle Advocacy Buddy (CBAB). CBABs will receive training and be a direct point of contact within their communities to assist families and individuals access services and receive support to ensure their long term welfare.

The Governor's Office of Adoption and Child Protection, the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council, the Florida Department of Children and Families and Prevent Child Abuse Florida are joining forces with the Florida Military Family and Community Covenant, Inc., other agencies and organizations statewide to build and sustain a network of connections to strengthen families. This network will promote protective factors known to increase the health and well-being of children and families, including our military families.