

# Lifelong Learning Initiative



## Partnering with families to build work and life skills and to create opportunities for lifelong learning and economic security through employment

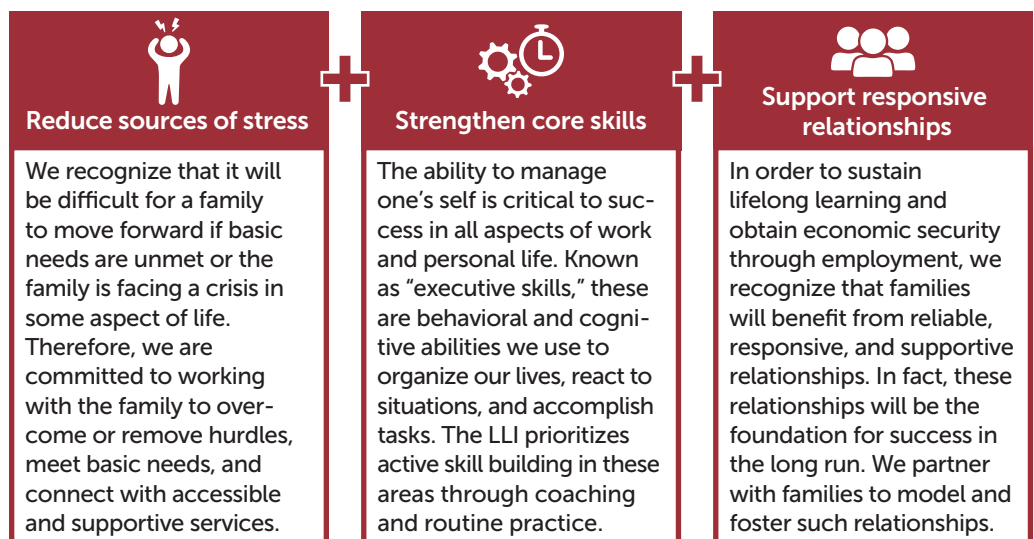
### Guiding Principles

- The family is at the center of a process designed to enhance their ability to make informed decisions, set priorities, and manage their life.
- Staff model goal-directed behaviors and practices aimed at positive habit formation among parents and their children.
- Staff and parent engage in a responsive, supportive, nonjudgmental, and mutually accountable coaching relationship—*guided self-determination*.
- The program provides resources and support to increase the family's likelihood of success.
- Staff inspire and celebrate the family's progress.

### A New Way Of Serving Families

Ramsey County Employment Services places the participating family at the center of a process designed to enhance their ability to pursue lifelong learning and economic security through employment. The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) is an opportunity for families

to set meaningful goals and for Employment Services to support families in achieving those goals. Our approach—the Lifelong Learning Initiative (LLI)—is anchored by three guiding principles for improving outcomes for children and families<sup>1</sup>:



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## A Research-Based Approach

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LLI is a participant-centered program that builds essential **executive functioning skills** using enhanced coaching and motivational interviewing techniques to create and meet employment goals. Research shows that living in poverty can get in the way of the executive skills necessary to achieve

goals. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses and Ramsey County believes in the ability of everyone to build these skills—participants and staff alike. LLI helps the participant identify their executive skill strengths and utilize them to set and achieve measurable and achievable employment gains.

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## The Coaching Process

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LLI involves a four-part goal achievement process:



- The **GoalLearn** phase focuses on mutual sharing and relationship-building. This phase is a conversational process of understanding a participants' circumstances, interests, personal strengths, and what motivates them. This process helps the participant zero in on a goal that is meaningful to them.
- The **GoalPlan** phase involves: 1) identifying a meaningful goal, 2) breaking the goal into manageable and achievable steps, 3) proactively naming potential obstacles and corresponding solutions to goal achievement, and 4) formalizing a concrete, specific plan to achieve a short-term goal.
- At the center of LLI is **GoalDo**—the **family taking action** toward their goals based on the plan that has been identified.
- In the **GoalReview** phase, coaches provide ongoing support to participants as they make progress towards their goals. This phase involves a frequent and regular RAP (Review, Assess, Plan) session between the coach and participant to review the participant's recent efforts and progress toward the short-term goal; to assess the goodness of fit of the goal and any obstacles in the way; and to revise the goal plan or identify additional supports.

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## A Holistic Approach For Employment Services

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In addition to reducing sources of stress, strengthening core skills, and supporting responsive relationships with families, LLI incorporates a parallel process for Employment Services staff. We believe that the same strategies to best serve Ramsey County's families are also the right strategies to support a healthy and productive staff team. This means:

- Thoughtfully streamlining administrative processes and requirements to enable staff to focus on the most meaningful work: partnering with families
- Building staff skills for effective coaching through regular supervision, targeted training, and investment in professional development

- Supporting staff learning and relational well-being through peer-to-peer relationships and mentoring

We recognize that this is an ongoing learning and improvement process for Employment Services. At the agency level, we are working to achieve consistency in using this approach, ensuring clarity at all levels of the organization, and engaging in an iterative learning process of our own: observing, reviewing, retraining, correcting, and affirming our practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2016). Building Core Capabilities for Life: The Science Behind the Skills Adults Need to Succeed in Parenting and in the Workplace. Retrieved from [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu).

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**Ramsey County is pleased to share information and support with other agencies considering transitioning their service delivery to participant-centered, goal-driven models. Contact Kate Probert ([kate.probert@ramseycounty.us](mailto:kate.probert@ramseycounty.us)) or Bruce Casselton ([bruce.casselton@ramseycounty.us](mailto:bruce.casselton@ramseycounty.us)).**