Finding Strengths

While working with families who may be facing challenging experiences, you may find that you too are being swept up in a whirlwind of emotions. This cloudiness can make it difficult for you to partner with the family to find a solution. The support that you offer may be clouded by your previous experiences. Perhaps you have worked with a different family who has gone through a similar situation. Perhaps, you have gone through a similar situation and found a viable solution. You may be tempted to offer those solutions that have worked before, but it is vital that you take five steps to reflect on the specific needs of the family with whom you are working.

Reflect on Your Perspective – Identify what assumptions you are making about the family and the situation, and choose to focus on the positive ones that will contribute to your strength based beliefs about this family.

Help the Family Identify and Work through Their Own Assumptions – Positive and honest communication is an asset that often helps build a family's resilience. Create a safe space physically, mentally and emotionally that allows families to explore their assumptions and biases toward a situation, which may help each family member embrace other perspectives.

Identify and Build on the Family’s Core Strength and Relationships – Reflect with parents about what character traits they may have and what strengths lie in their formal and informal social support systems that will help them find a solution.

Celebrate Success While Acknowledging Struggles – Highlight success and acknowledge progress to affirm and empower families that positive change is occurring.

Refocus on Goals, Develop Strategies and Maintain Optimism – Use the success and progress to propel the family forward into the goal setting process by facilitating discussions around their desires for themselves and other family members.

To access additional information and to practice these steps, click here.
"A Closer Look” – Quality Standards Resource Guides

“A Closer Look” are resource guides for each section of the Quality Standards that will help clarify questions you have and assist you with the implementation of the essential requirements and quality standards. Each guide will explain the quality standards or essential requirements within the Quality Standards section. It will give the topic, definition and guidance of each. The guidance will help you better understand what is and what is not allowable to be counted as a connection.

Using Penelope? Need Help?
Penelope Q&A sessions are available upon request for all PAT Affiliate programs in Pennsylvania. Contact Wenda Deardorff or Allyson Fulton for more information or to schedule a session.

A Closer Look: Resource Network

Standard
Essential Requirement #15

Topic
Parent educators connect families to resources that help them reach their goals and address their needs.

Definition
Connecting to a resource is defined as giving detailed information to the parent(s) about specific medical/dental health, mental health, education, social services, recreational and enrichment resources or recommending that the family get a specific assessment or service. As part of connecting families, the parent educator needs to help the family prepare to access the resource (i.e. providing contact information, reviewing paperwork to bring, discussing transportation and exploring possible barriers).

Guidance
Resource connections made need to be tailored to the needs of each family. Telling all families in a program about an upcoming community event is not a resource connection. However, if the family has a goal of spending more time together, recommending that the family attend the community event would be a resource connection as it directly ties to the family’s needs.

The guides can be found at the PAT portal on the Supervisor’s Handbook page under Quality Standards. Take a moment today to review them. Note: these guides can be used by any affiliate. For more information, contact a member of the PA PAT State Office.

The Four Big Ideas behind the Strengthening Families™:
A Changed Relationship with Parents

This series of articles will explore the four big ideas behind the Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework identified by the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP).

The Strengthening Families™ Protective Factors Framework, developed by CSSP, is based on research focused on the characteristics and actions of parents that create environments that keep families strong and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. The five protective factors are:

- **Parental Resilience** – The ability of parents to respond productively to stress, bounce back from difficult situations and apply past learning to future difficult situations.

- **Social Connections** – Parents can identify supportive people in their lives to reduce isolation and share the joys and stresses of parenting.

- **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development** – Parents have access to accurate and up-to-date information about their child’s development and apply this knowledge to create environments that support their child’s physical and cognitive development.

- **Concrete Support in Times of Need** – Parents can identify their family’s needs and know where and how to access supports to meet their needs.

- **Social and Emotional Competence of Children** – Parents model social and emotional skills and provide opportunities and environments that promote their child’s development of skills related to emotional regulation, communication, empathy and other aspects of social and emotional competence.
Idea 3: A Changed Relationship with Parents

The third big idea is that Strengthening Families™ represents a changed relationship with parents. While many family support programs in Pennsylvania already recognize the important role parents and caregivers play in the lives of children, some family-serving systems still see children as the main focus of their work. We can all agree that the positive growth and development of children is of paramount concern, but as CSSP explains “children grow up in families, not programs – and we cannot achieve good outcomes for children without engaging their parents as partners.”¹

Parents are family support professionals’ partners in creating healthy, nurturing environments for their children. By increasing their understanding of child development and positive parenting practices, caregivers increase their capacity to nurture and protect their children. Programs can provide opportunities for parents to increase their knowledge, share ideas with other parents and practice new skills.

As Browne points out, “by focusing on the parent, the child, and the parent-child relationship together, the Strengthening Families™ approach is a two-generation approach.”² According to the Center for High Impact Philanthropy, a two-generation approach is “a strategy or approach to promote young children’s healthy development by developing the capabilities and resources of parents or caregivers.”³ By communicating that parents are valued partners, family support professionals can build relationships with parents that are based on mutual respect and trust. This can lead to supporting caregivers to build their capacity in areas beyond parenting. For example programs can provide access to job-skills training, continuing education and healthcare. These supports can help parents to support their families and “improving family circumstances can help improve children’s health and learning achievement.”³

By partnering with parents, family support professionals can also improve their own programs. When parents feel valued, they are more likely to provide constructive feedback to improve service delivery and more willing to lend their time and talents to the program. Programs can ensure that parents have a voice in their organizations by including parents on advisory boards and engaging parents in leadership roles.

For more information about two-generation approaches, see the report

Resources
**Safe Kids Corner**

**Farm Safety**

Farming is one of the leading industries in Pennsylvania and a place for families to call home. Farms, however, can be dangerous to your child's health if you do not implement safety measures that will help ensure their safety.

Maintain safety zones around buildings and structures. Some structures are extremely dangerous places for children. Special fencing and barriers need to be placed around or over these structures so that children cannot enter them. Children should be able to reach feed and water containers from outside an animal's pen or corral. Regularly make time for family safety briefings that include instructions for handling and reporting emergencies.

**Dangerous Areas**

**Silos** – These are particularly dangerous because of gases and running machinery during the filling and unloading of silage and grains.

**Grain Bins** – The grain inside can turn into “quicksand,” especially during bottom unloading. Many children have drowned in bins being unloaded.

**Farm Ponds and Manure Pits** – These are potential drowning sites with gasses and low oxygen hazards. Always make sure that ponds and pits are inaccessible to children.

**Barn Hay-Drop Openings** – Fractured skulls and deaths have been caused by falls through a hay-drop opening during play.

**Animal Safety**

One of the leading causes of injury to children on a farm is animals. Before allowing your child to interact with animals, make sure they are able to be calm, quiet and steady in their motions. If your child cannot listen to you or follow directions, then they are too young to be interacting with animals. Constant adult supervision is a must for young children around animals. Before allowing children to approach an animal, it is important for caregivers to teach them a few safety rules and demonstrate the right way.

**Safety Tips**

- Approach with a slow, steady pace. Avoid approaching from blind sports and ensure the animal is aware of your presence and proximity.
- Speak quietly with your hand outstretched.
- Stop close enough that the animal may sniff or reach toward you. As long as the animal remains calm, continue to approach at about the shoulder area.
- Pet the animal by keeping the fingers together and the hand flat. This will reduce the risk of being bitten.
- Consider any other risks that might exist (such as loud noises or uneven surfaces). Do not permit children to be around mothers who are still feeding their babies, adult males or ill animals. These animals can be protective, aggressive and less predictable, making them more dangerous to children.
- Avoid animals during feeding time.
- Do not let children have contact with wild animals, especially if they show signs of illness or abnormal behavior.
- Always wash your hands before and after touching or handling animals.
- Know the warning signs to recognize when an animal is distraught or scared. Each animal has a self-defense mechanism (claws, biting, kicking, running), some animals have more than one. Be aware of different mechanisms to provide proper handling of the animal and decrease the likelihood of injury.

**Chemical Safety**

Pesticides and other toxic materials like dairy pipeline cleaner should be kept in a locked storage area. Also, secure treated seeds and fertilizer. Place appropriate warning decals on tractors, machines, grain bins, silos, wagons, and any other potentially hazardous item. Explain the significance of these warning symbols to children.

**Grain Safety**

There are many types of structures where grain in various conditions is stored. One of the most common types in Pennsylvania is the grain bin. Grain bins store low moisture grains until needed. Most grain bins are designed to unload from the bottom center of the bin. High moisture grains are often stored in tall, small diameter silos, which present their own hazards. Some of the same hazards that are found in grain bins are also present in grain storage silos.

The four main situations that pose an entrapment risk include:

- Entrapment of a worker by flowing grain
- The collapse of a grain bridge
- The avalanche of a grain wall
- Entrapment of a worker using a grain vacuum

The following steps can reduce the risk of grain bin entrapment. While some of the following steps may seem simple or trivial, they can save your life.

**Safety Tips**

- Place entrapment warning decals on grain bins and grain transport vehicles.
- Prevent unauthorized entry to grain bins and grain transport vehicles, especially by children.
- Make sure all workers and children are aware of entrapment hazards.
- Keep grain in proper condition. This may include the use of mechanical stirrers to prevent the grain from molding. Remember, out of condition grain was cited as the leading cause of adult entrapments.
- Use inspection holes or grain bin level markers instead of entering a grain vacuum.
- Enter a grain bin or grain transport vehicle only if it is absolutely necessary. Use a body harness secured to the outside of the bin or vehicle.
- Use a pole to break up possible grain bridges from outside the bin.
Farm Safety (continued)

• Lockout/tag-out all auger controls before entering a bin.
• Have at least two observers present during grain bin entry. Children should not enter a grain bin.
• Establish a form of nonverbal communication with observers (hand signals).
• Work from top to bottom when cleaning grain bin walls.

Ponds
Farm ponds, lagoons, water wells and water troughs are often found on Pennsylvania farms and all have contributed to accidental drowning deaths. These water sources serve a variety of functions on the farm but can also be a source of danger and liability. Most victims range in age from toddlers to young adults and sometimes are not residents of the farm where the incident occurred.

There are hidden dangers associated with farm ponds, including contamination by agricultural fertilizers, pesticides, livestock waste and other pollutants. Each present special health problems. If the water is cloudy, has a foul odor or is covered with algae, it should not be used for swimming, because of possible human infectious agents.

Safety Tips
• Never leave a child unattended around water.
• If possible, install a fence of at least four feet in height around the perimeter of the pond.
• Have life-saving equipment such as life rings or reaching poles for use.
• Teach children how to swim and to never swim alone.
• Teach children that swimming in open water is different than a pool, there could be drop offs, sharp objects or contaminated water.
• Children should wear a certified personal floatation device if they do not know how to swim.

Ponds used for swimming should be sampled every spring for water quality by a certified laboratory.

Manure Storage Safety
Manure storage units are a potential hazard on the farm due to the toxic gases released and the confined area for storage. Avoid operating heavy equipment near manure storage areas and frequently monitor manure gas levels. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Hazardous Occupations in Agriculture (AgHO) regulations relate to employment restrictions of youth in hazardous occupations in agriculture. These employment restrictions do not apply to youths employed on farms owned or operated by their parents or legal guardian.

For all other youths employed on a farm, the regulations prohibit working in, around or with a number of potentially hazardous farm work activities unless exempted by special training such as training that exists for tractors and some machinery. There is no training exemption for working in manure storages; therefore, all youth under the age of 16 who are not the children or legally adopted children of the farm operator are absolutely prohibited from working inside confined space manure storages.

Tractor Safety
Tractor rollovers are the single deadliest type of injury incident on farms in the United States. Children lack the physical and cognitive skills needed to operate a tractor safely before the age of 14. Before the age of 14, children lack depth perception, speed processing, decision-making skills, strength and balance and coordination needed to operate a tractor. When a child is ready to operate a tractor, they should only operate wide-front tractors equipped with Rollover Protection Structure (ROPS) and a seat belt. An adult should ensure that the child can reach all controls while wearing a seatbelt, that a pre-operations service check has been completed, and that no extra riders are allowed on the tractor. This guideline assumes that the child will be operating the tractor in daylight, under dry conditions, while not on a steep slope and with reasonable distance from ditches, trees and fences.

Safety Tips
• Tractors are not toys and need to be treated as heavy equipment
• Follow the rules and guidelines set for operating heavy equipment
• Learn how to operate the tractor before using the tractor for work
• Do not drive on roadways until the age of 16
• Never operate a tractor without an adult present
Family Support

Family Support Webinars
First Wednesday of the month
10:00 AM - 11:15 AM
Sep 6, Relationships with Families
Oct 4, TBD

Parents as Teachers International Conference 2017

Parents as Teachers
Until one month prior to the event, registration will only be open to Pennsylvania participants. If you have a new hire in the month before the event, contact Wenda Deardorff.

PAT Foundational & Model Implementation
For new parent educators & supervisors of affiliate programs
Sep 18-22, Camp Hill, Pa.

PAT Foundational
For new approved users
Sep 18-20, Camp Hill, Pa.

PA Foundational 2: 3 Years through Kindergarten
Sep 28-29, Camp Hill, Pa.

Family Support at the Center for Schools and Communities provides training and technical assistance to Parents as Teachers providers, Children’s Trust Fund grantees and the Strengthening Families Leadership Team.

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Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers is based at the Center for Schools and Communities. Learn more at the following sites:

Children’s Trust Fund Strengthening Families

Parents as Teachers