Trauma informed care is increasingly becoming a topic that family support programs are integrating into recurring conversations. In addition to accessing training and support for staff members, programs are seeking screening and assessment tools that are evidence-based and research informed. Utilizing such tools, may help program staff identify appropriate resources for children and families who have experienced trauma.

According to the Chronicle for Social Change, most child welfare systems do not routinely screen children for trauma. Research funded by the Administration for Children and Families acknowledges that various states including, but not limited to Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Montana and North Carolina have begun screening children involved with the child welfare system for trauma. Though each state used different methods to measure trauma, they all found relatively similar results, that children who were in the system were exposed to high rates of trauma. For example, 40 percent of all children who participated in the screening in Connecticut registered enough symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to qualify as having a high likelihood of a PTSD diagnosis. That may be as much as five times the rate for the general population.¹

There are times when family support workers will not have knowledge of a child and their family’s involvement in the child welfare system. Having limited knowledge accents the importance of screening for trauma. While we do not yet have solid evidence about the best methods and tools for screening children, Jason Lang, lead author of a case study on trauma screening and director of dissemination and implementation for the Child Health and Development Institute offers several suggestions for ways in which programs can consider implementing trauma screenings, including:

- Assembling an implementation team
- Identifying specific measures to collect in the trauma screen
- Prioritizing implementation
- Forging better collaboration with mental health departments

Collaborating with community partners, which are a part of the concrete support systems that families lean on during times of crisis, strengthens the effectiveness of your program. Effective strategies, well-informed staff and proven practices can offset the impact of trauma that is experience by families.

Resources
Screenings: What PAT Means by Annually

The PAT essential requirement for screening states “Screening takes place within 90 days of enrollment for children four months or older and then at least annually thereafter.”

The question is, what does PAT mean by annually. While we talked with directors and supervisors as they completed their APR, we realized they – and our own team – were interpreting this requirement in a number of ways. After speaking with the National Center, we want to provide further guidance on what it takes to meet this requirement.

What We Learned
The PAT screening requirement is based on the program year (July 1 – June 30), rather than 12 months from the child’s annual screening date.

When the date of transition or exit is known for a family, affiliates are encouraged to have a transition or exit plan that includes a complete screening. Parent educators should plan to provide screening prior to the family’s exit, even if the exit date occurs before the child’s annual screening date. This may not always be possible, given individual family circumstances and the transition plan for the family.

When screening prior to exit is not possible, it is important to remember that PAT measurement criteria for program-level adherence to the essential requirements have built in flexibility. At least 60 percent of children must have received the required screening to meet the essential requirement. This provides a cushion so that affiliates are not penalized when some children, due to timing of exit or other circumstances, may not receive their annual screening.

If family attrition has reached a point where so many families exit prior to their annual screening date that the essential requirement is not being met at the program level, affiliates are encouraged to look carefully at their family engagement policy, procedure and strategies and utilize a CQI approach to increase family engagement and reduce attrition rates.

Reminder
The essential requirement around annual screening for children is the minimum required to achieve model fidelity. The developer of the most frequently used developmental screening tools, the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE2, recommends more frequent screening. In addition, many funders require more frequent screening and many affiliates are committed to exceeding the minimum screening requirement.

Summary
Affiliate programs want to strive to have complete screenings for all children every PAT program year (July 1 – June 30).

If you have further questions regarding this essential requirement, contact the PA PAT State Office.

Penelope Tip: Parent/Guardian Information Records
There should be one Parent/Guardian Information Record for each parent/guardian designated as “primary caregiver” per family. Information is pulled from the Parent/Guardian Information Record for both the APR and MIECHV Form 1. All families should have family, child and parent/guardian information records.

To check which forms still need to be completed for families, request the Family Records Worksheet on the De-Identified Data Request form; this can only be done once a month by the program supervisor. The link to the request form is at the bottom of the User Guides page.

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

The Four Big Ideas behind the Strengthening Families™: Alignment with Developmental Sciences

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 4: Alignment with Developmental Science
The fourth big idea is that the Strengthening Families™ approach is aligned with developmental science. The aim of the framework is to give practitioners “the tools and guidance they need to align their practice with the best available knowledge about child development.”1(p.1) The research behind the framework focused on early childhood because research shows that this is a critical period of development. As Brazelton and Greenspan describe, “early childhood is both the most critical and the most vulnerable time in any child’s development. In the first few years, the ingredients for intellectual, emotional, and moral growth are laid down. We cannot fail children in these early years.”2(p.1) By supporting parents in building protective factors, they are more able to provide environments where their children thrive.

One way the framework is aligned with developmental science is through its focus on nurturing and attachment – described as “an implicit component of the five Strengthening Families protective factors.”2(p.1) Research tells us that a strong nurturing bond between young children and their primary caregivers contributes to a myriad of developmental outcomes including neurological development. At birth, the brain’s neurons are mostly apart from one another. A primary task for brain development between birth and age three is for the connections between neurons, known as synapses, to develop. The child’s caregivers are very important to this development because “the child’s experiences are the stimulation that sparks the activity between axons and dendrites and creates synapses.”3 In fact, “young children need safety, love, conversation and a stimulating environment to develop and keep important synapses in the brain.”3

The protective factors support parents in developing nurturing relationships with their children. Helping parents to understand the importance of early brain development can lead to more attuned parenting. The protective factor of knowledge of parenting and child development encourages this learning. Further, parents with resilience are able to manage difficult situations and cope with stress. A parent who can manage stress is more capable of focusing on nurturing their child and building a strong attachment.2

Early childhood is not the only critical period of development among children. As children get older and enter adolescence, they take on a more active role in their own development – they begin to make choices and engage in activities that affect their physical, cognitive and emotional development. To guide professionals working with youth, the Center for the Study of Social Policy developed Youth Thrive, a protective factors framework that explores the characteristics that help young people develop into competent adults. These two frameworks are complementary because they support children and families during critical periods of development.

More Information
ZERO to THREE – Brain Development in Young Children
Center for the Study of Social Policy – Youth Thrive

Resources

The Sharing Corner
The Sharing Corner is for you, by you. Share your expertise, celebrations, testimonies and news. Send an email with the information you would like to share to Wenda Deardorff.*

* Center for Schools and Communities reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of the information.

Pennsylvania Children’s Trust Fund

Center for Schools and Communities • 275 Grandview Avenue, Suite 200 • Camp Hill, PA 17011 • (717) 763-1661
Safe Kids Corner

Seatbelts
Buckling up on every ride is the single most important thing a family can do to stay safe on the road. By Pennsylvania law, every child 16 and under must be restrained in a proper safety seat for their age. Non-compliance is a primary offense in Pennsylvania.

Facts
Seat belts save almost 13,000 lives a year. Compared with other age groups, teens have the lowest rate of seat belt use. Only 53 percent of high school students reported always wearing a seat belt when riding with someone else. Studies have suggested that a driver is TWICE as likely to die in a crash if the back passenger is not restrained.

Safety Tips
• Seat belts are designed to hold passengers in place and in conjunction with the airbag provide optimal protection. Passengers are safer in the vehicle then outside the vehicle.
• The safest position for all passengers is the back seat. Children should ride in the back seat until they are 13. Air bags, which typically are located in the front seat, can cause injuries to adults and severe injuries to small children if they are in the front seat during a crash.
• When adults wear seat belts, children will wear seat belts. Be a role model and buckle up for every ride. Be sure everyone in the vehicle buckles up, too.
• We know kids like to slouch or lean against the windows during the drive, but it makes a difference in terms of safety. Have your child sit upright when using a safety seat belt.
• Use a booster seat with the vehicle lap AND shoulder safety belts until your child passes the Safety Belt Fit Test.

• When your child reaches 4 feet 9 inches, use the Safety Belt Fit Test to determine if the child is ready to use the adult seat belt without a booster seat. Use the Safety Belt Fit Test on every child under 13.

Safety Belt Fit Test
This test will help determine whether or not your child is ready to use the adult seatbelt without a booster seat. All steps have to be answered yes before your child is ready to ride in a car without a booster seat.

Step 1: Sit the child in the back seat with their bottom and back against the vehicle’s back seat
Can your child stay in that position through the duration of the trip?
• NO – the child must remain in a booster seat
• YES – take step 2 in the test

Step 2: Check the bending of the knees. Do the child’s knees bend naturally at the seat’s edge?
• NO – the child must remain in a booster seat
• YES – take step 3 in the test

Step 3: Buckle the seat belt
Does the lap belt stay low on the hips and not rest on the soft part of the stomach?
• NO – the child must remain in a booster seat
• YES – take step 4 in the test

Step 4: Check the shoulder belt
Does it lay centered on the collarbone and shoulder and not on the face or neck?
• NO – the child must remain in a booster seat
• YES – take step 5 in the test

Step 5: Check if the child can maintain the correct seating position
Can the child maintain the correct seating position with the shoulder belt on the shoulder and the lap belt low across the hips for the whole trip?
• NO – the child must remain in a booster seat and retest in a month
• YES – the child has passed the Seat Belt Fit Test
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.

Partnerships Project Manager
Karen Shanoski  
(717) 763-1661 x139  
kshanosski@csc.csiu.org

Family Support Specialist
Wenda Deardorff  
(717) 763-1661 x116  
wdeardorff@csc.csiu.org

Parents as Teachers and Strengthening Families
Tiedra Marshall  
(717) 763-1661 x103  
tmarshall@csc.csiu.org

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

Family Support Technical Assistant Coordinators
• Children’s Trust Fund and Strengthening Families
Rijelle Kraft  
(717) 763-1661 x221  
rkraft@csc.csiu.org

Family Support Webinars
First Wednesday of the month  
10:00 AM - 11:15 AM
Oct 4 Be Strong Parent Cafes  
Nov 1 Family and Community Engagement

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  
Jan 22-26 Camp Hill, Pa.

PAT Foundational
For new approved users  
Jan 22-24 Camp Hill, Pa.

PA Foundational 2: 3 Years through Kindergarten  
Feb 26-27 Camp Hill, Pa.