In last month’s news brief, part one in this three-part series focused on strengthening the key attributes of having a positive outlook, fostering spirituality and establishing familial harmony.

This installation addresses the importance of having strong communication and financial management skills and the way they can affect a family’s ability to overcome a crisis successfully.

Families possess multiple qualities that allow them to practice resiliency. Family resiliency is a “dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity”.

During challenging times, such as losing a job, undergoing financial strain or facing health or housing challenges, it is vital that families continue to work on building their communication and financial management skills. Effective communication and financial management skills are evidence of healthy problem solving skills, one of the most important executive functions developed in childhood.

When children have a family who can positively role model this skill, they have the opportunity to see the skill in action and know how to utilize it effectively when necessary.

As a reminder, when working with families it is important to help them to focus on developing key attributes including: a positive outlook, spirituality, family member accord, flexibility, communication, financial management, time together, mutual recreational interests, routines and rituals and social support.

Communication – Resolving conflict heavily depends on the ability to communicate effectively. It is important that family members discuss with each other how they are affected, their perspective of the situation and clarity of each individual’s role in the crisis or situation.

According to Froma Walsh, these components – clarity, open emotional expression and collaborative problem solving – are important dynamics of demonstrating effective communication. Families may utilize different methods of communication, including verbal and non-verbal. Regardless of their preferred technique, it is most important that positive communication exists in lieu of no communication, which leads to an increased risk and a vulnerability to experiencing negative situations.

Financial Management – When parents face a financial crisis, it sometimes makes it hard to focus on being effective in their role as a parent. That crisis overtakes their mental capacity causing parental deficits in the areas of nurturing, guiding and discipline. It is helpful, when families lean on the other protective factors like concrete support and social connections. A family’s prior experience with financial strain is also an important factor to consider. Through recall, a family may be able to identify both formal and informal networks of support, which may prove to be essential to surmounting the challenge of managing their finances.

As you continue to provide support, using a strength based approach through positive inquiry, it may help families to recall previous strategies they used to resolve and cope with the situation at hand. Helpful questions may include:

- Whom do you talk to when you experience challenging situations?
- Growing up, did your family openly discuss challenges? How has this influenced your ability to express your emotions?
- How has financial strain changed the role(s) of each family member?
- How has this affected your parenting behaviors?
As a family support professional, supporting a family in strengthening these skills requires you to highlight your role as a partner by evaluating solutions and ways they can continue to engage in high quality interactions with their children to minimize the impact of adverse situations on the development of their child.

2016-17 Affiliate Performance Report (APR)

Now is the time to review changes to the 2016-17 APR to ensure you are ready for submission by August 15, 2017. Parents as Teachers National Center posted the following documents on the APR portal for affiliates to review:

- 2016-17 APR
- 2016-17 APR Instructions
- 2016-17 PMR APR Crosswalk

Take a few minutes to view these important documents. Highlighted in yellow are changes to this year’s APR program.

APR Instructions will help you answer questions correctly; increasing the chance the APR will be completed correctly the first time.

After submitting the APR, be sure to view your affiliate’s Performance Measures Report (PMR). This report will help affiliates understand their fidelity to the model in relation to implementation and service delivery, and act as a tool for continuous quality improvement.

If you have questions after reviewing the 2016-17 APR, contact a member of the PA State Office team.

Penelope Tips

The “Hold” option on the Family Information Record is only available when initiated by the family. It is not for a parent educator on an extended leave or if a position is currently unfilled.

Need help with Penelope?

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.

Using Social Media in Your Family Support Program

Many of us use social media in our personal lives to connect with friends and family, report life events and share photos. But how important is it for family support organizations to have a social media presence?

According to a study completed by the Pew Research Center, 75 percent of parents use social media. They are using these platforms for a variety of reasons including to find parenting information, seek and give support and share good news.1

How can family support agencies effectively use social media to engage parents and others interested in supporting families? A quick internet search provides a myriad of advice about how nonprofit organizations can effectively engage stakeholders using social media, but the number of results and the prospect of developing an intentional strategy could be overwhelming. To get started using social media or to evaluate your organization’s current use, consider the following:

Why – As Allison Gauss points out, “with the power of social media, nonprofits can now speak directly to supporters on the platforms they already visit daily.”2 Social media allows organizations to share their successes, appeal to donors or volunteers, advertise upcoming events and connect to their constituents.

How – Before diving into posting content, it is important to develop a plan with intentional strategies. You may need to design policies regarding content creation, determine who is responsible for posting and how frequently, and develop a strategy to evaluate the impact of your social media strategy.

Who – It is very important to consider the audience you plan to reach and tailor messages to them. Are you hoping to reach donors? Prospective families? The general public? Determining who your audience is will help you to decide what kind of content to post.

Which Platforms – There are many social media platforms available and each has specific benefits and uses. The audience you wish to reach will in part determine the platforms you choose. Finding out which platforms your target audiences are using is crucial. The Pew Research Center study found that parents used Facebook, Pinterest and LinkedIn most frequently, but parents might not be the only audience you want to engage.1 For example, you might use Facebook to help parents connect or advertise events; Pinterest to provide examples of activities and lists of books to share with their children; Twitter to share information and relevant news sources; and Instagram to share powerful images that convey your organization’s impact.

What – A survey from the Case Foundation found that 74 percent of nonprofits “use social networks as a megaphone, announcing events and activities and sharing organization-centric info.”3 However, social media is about engaging people in a conversation. Ask questions, include striking visuals and

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videos, and share information from other organizations that complement your work. It is important to have a variety of types of posts. One approach to follow when determining what to post is the Three As. This strategy encourages you to dedicate one-third of your posts to appreciation (giving thanks to donors, volunteers, staff or recognizing families), one-third to advocacy (sharing information about issues that affect those you serve – internally created or other source shared content) and one-third to appeals (asking for donations and support).4

More on Using Social Media

Social Media for Child Welfare Agencies – Child Welfare Information Gateway compiled resources including considerations before creating a social media presence, how to develop guidelines and policies, and examples of successful campaigns.

The New Face of Nonprofit Marketing – Strategies for using social media effectively including steps to develop a social media plan by the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities.

The Nonprofit Social Media Cheat Sheet – The sheet (by Classy) provides helpful information on what to post to different social media platforms and how often. It also provides dimensions for images to ensure they look optimal on each platform.

An Introduction to Social Media and Social Networking for Family-Governed and Youth-Led Organizations – Nassau County Family Support System of Care and Long Island Families Together staff members presented at the Annual Conference of National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health offering advice for creating a social media presence, discussing the uses of different platforms and providing tips to engage constituents effectively.

Parents as Teachers – Although the guides about Facebook and Twitter focus on using social media for advocacy, the tips are useful for all types of use.
• Using Facebook for Advocacy
• Using Twitter for Advocacy
• Get Social. Why Facebook, Twitter and Social Networking Matter to Your Organization

Visit the PAT Facebook and Twitter page.

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 like to share to Wenda Deardorff.*

Parents as Teachers’ Beginnings, Inc. is proud to be a part of the Early Learning Pathway for Cambria County – a collaboration led by the United Way of the Laurel Highlands and the Greater Johnstown School District. The Early Learning Pathway goals are to bring together evidenced-based early learning programs in order to highlight the importance of education for children prenatal to entering kindergarten. The Early Learning Pathway also expects to increase community support for these invaluable programs and thereby improving the quality of the programs available to families in the county. Included in the partnership are Home Nursing Agency, Beginnings Inc., PA Pre-K Counts, Professional Family Care Services, Community Action Partnership of Cambria County and Cambria County Child Care Information Services.

Announced in December 2016, Early Learning Pathway is the beginning of a larger plan.

Greater Johnstown School District and United Way of the Laurel Highlands have recognized the need for additional support and focus on teaching our youngest children while supporting their families. Children enter kindergarten with a variety of backgrounds and knowledge. The more influence educators can have prior to their first day of school the better. By coordinating and utilizing these influential organizations, the community buy-in for the initiative has a better chance of succeeding.

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

Pennsylvania Children’s Trust Fund

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Recalls and Registration Cards

Bringing home a new baby or buying a birthday gift for a child? With thousands of products to choose from it is hard to determine the best choice and impossible to know what products may have a recall in the future. As a consumer, be sure to complete the registration card provided with each product. Upon announcement of a recall, the manufacturer will send you the information for a refund or replacement parts.

Did you buy a product second-hand? Research to make sure there is no recall and if there is, seek repairs or replace the product.

Items to avoid when buying second-hand:

Car seats – It is extremely important to avoid buying a used child-passenger safety seat because you may not know its age or if it was recalled; both are critical pieces of information to help ensure your child’s safety. Because the car seat is the most important safety device to protect a child in the car, risking the history of that car seat could lead to potential dangers. Car seats also have an expiration date; do not use them beyond that date because they are made of plastic, which breaks down over time.

Cribs – In 2011, new federal safety regulations were set for cribs. All cribs manufactured and sold (including resale) must comply with new and improved federal safety standards such as strengthened crib slats, improved mattress support, quality hardware and more rigorous testing. These regulations apply to all full-size and non-full-size cribs and prohibit the manufacturing or selling of traditional drop-side rail cribs.

Before buying a new product, here are some guidelines:
• Do the research
• Check for recalls
• Register the product
• Read the manual

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
May 15-19 Williamsport, Pa.
June 19-23 Camp Hill, Pa.
Sep 18-22 Camp Hill, Pa.

PAT Foundational
For new approved users
May 15-17 Williamsport, Pa.

PA Foundational 2: 3 Years through Kindergarten
May 18-19 Williamsport, Pa.
July 31-August 1 Homestead, Pa.
Sep 25-26 Camp Hill, Pa.