Resilience and Recovery – Part 3 of 3

Last month’s article focused on strengthening the key attributes of being flexible, having strong communication, and financial management skills. This final part of the series will address the importance of spending high quality time together as a family by focusing on similar interests, establishing and maintaining routines, and attaining positive social support. These attributes paired with the attributes from last month can impact a family’s ability to successfully overcome a crisis.

A family that possesses resiliency is able to overcome stressful situations with warmth and love, keeping their family intact. Families have internal strengths that when recognized, can help them through challenging experiences. According to the Center for the Study of Social Policy, spending time together by doing things that are of common interest of the whole family, can buffer families from the harmful impact of toxic stress. Some of the benefits of engaging in social activities include, lowered risk of child maltreatment, lowered risk of parental depression, increased feelings of parental confidence and positive social and emotional development of the child. Effective communication and financial management skills are evidence of healthy problem solving skills, one of the most important executive functions that are 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 effectively utilize it when necessary.

As a reminder, when working with families it is important to help them 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.

Time Together – Children whose parents spend quality time with them reap cognitive benefits; activities such as reading books and playing games results in benefits in their cognitive, social and emotional, and linguistic development. This can be a challenge for parents who are trying to balance work and family. This becomes increasingly difficult for single parent homes. Parents can make use of routine activities and chores such as laundry sorting, grocery shopping or bed time routines.

Mutual Recreational Interests – Families who are able to engage in common activities bring to life the idea that they are a system or a team. This cohesiveness reminds them that they have each other to rely on in times of need. Engaging in common interests also provides opportunities to strengthen their communication skills. As they process their experiences verbally, they create a platform for all members to express their feelings and enhance their social and emotional connections.

Routines and Rituals – Routine occurrences span from daily interactions to periodic instances. These can include family dinners, birthdays or age specific ceremonies, holidays or events of accomplishment such as a graduation. These events help families maintain a sense of stability. They also serve as reminders of what a family has accomplished and the skills that it took to meet their goals.

Social Support – Families have both formal and informal social supports. Informal social support can include family members, friends, neighbors or members of peer groups. Formal support can include faith based communities, social service organizations and their family support professional. Families can better meet their basic needs by knowing who is available to support them and knowing when and how to access their forms of support.
There are many opportunities for families to experience stability needed to achieve a positive sense of family well-being. As families continue to grow and change, it is important that the family support professional guides the family’s understanding of how each individual family member’s role is impacted and how internal family relationships affect one another. Through ongoing conversations, the family support professional can help families recognize their internal strengths and assist them in using them to help all members of the family reach their goals. The Center for the Study of Social Policy offers a wealth of resources and information that supports the helping partnership that exists between professionals and families.

Author: Allyson Fulton

PAT Technical Assistance Brief: Family Engagement & Exit Guidance

The Parents as Teachers National Center recently released a technical assistance brief aimed at assisting PAT affiliates in developing family engagement and exit policies and procedures.

PAT encourages all affiliates to develop a family engagement and exit policy and outline procedures to provide guidance to parent educators for engaging families by detailing the steps parent educators should take if they lose contact with an enrolled family. The family engagement and exit policy and procedures should support parent educators and supervisors in promoting families’ consistent participation in services and enduring consistent, high quality PAT services across the affiliate.

Important:
• Families should never be automatically exited from the program in the event of staff turnover or funding loss.
• The recorded family exit date should reflect the date on which the affiliate made the last attempt to contact the family and/or notified the family of the discontinuation of services, in alignment with the procedure and timeline developed.

Source: Parents as Teachers National Center

Penelope Tips
Check out the updated user guides on the PAT web portal under the Penelope tab. All guides have been revised in the last two months and are a great resource when trying to determine next steps such as understanding data errors.

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.

Resource Guide to Trauma-Informed Human Services Released by Administration for Children and Families

Many family support organizations work with caregivers and children who have experienced trauma. Research has shown that traumatic experiences in childhood can lead to poor outcomes for children and manifest in health issues in adulthood. Further, trauma can impact young children’s brains and have lasting effects on thought patterns and behaviors. While the effects of trauma can be severe, when staff understand the nature of trauma and build skills and practices that are trauma informed, they can better serve and support families.

To support human services staff, the Administration for Children and Families, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administrations, the Administration for Community Living, the Offices of the Assistant Secretary for Health and the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at HHS developed a Resource Guide to Trauma-Informed Human Services. This toolkit is intended to provide an introduction to the topic of trauma, a discussion of why understanding and addressing trauma is important for human services programs, and a “road map” to find relevant resources.

The guide includes background information including concept papers on topics such as toxic stress, resilience and historical trauma; Q&A sections on various topics; and community spotlights which showcase three communities’ efforts to address trauma and make changes in practice. The resource section of the guide provides information broken down by type of program – such as early childhood or child welfare programs – and the population served – such as immigrant or refugee populations. Be sure to review this extensive resource as you work with families experiencing trauma.

Author: Ashley Graves
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.
Safe Kids Corner

Fall and Window Safety

Unintentional falls are the leading cause of non-fatal injuries for children in the United States. In 2013, unintentional falls resulted in nearly 3 million injuries requiring treatment in an emergency room. Falls are the number one contributor to traumatic brain injury in children ages 0-14. From the moment a baby starts to crawl, the world is a new adventure and they are on the move. From a child’s perspective, everything is interesting and they will try to reach whatever is in sight. Little bumps and bruises will happen along the way. Preventing a dangerous injury will require some preparation though. We recommend installing all safety devices before your little one is on the move.

Safety tips

- Install window guards and stops; screens are meant to keep bugs out, not children in. Properly install window guards to prevent unintentional injuries. For windows above the first floor, include an emergency release device in case of fire.
- Open windows from the top and close and lock after use.
- Keep kids from climbing near windows.
- Secure babies and young children in high chairs, infant carriers, swings and strollers. Make it a habit starting from the beginning.
- Wear protective gear when playing sports or doing any wheeled sports.
- Use playgrounds with shock absorbing materials (mulch, shredded rubber, pebbles) and avoid playgrounds on asphalt or concrete surfaces.
- Never leave a child alone in a shopping cart and use a harness or safety belt. Infant car seats should be placed in the basket of the shopping cart and never on top of the child seat of the shopping cart.
- Install hardware safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs and declutter any stairs to prevent falls. Actively supervise toddlers on the stairs and guide them to success. Stairs should be well lit.
- Consider anti-slip rugs for floors and shower mats or decals in the bathtub.
- Secure all televisions and furniture to the wall using mounts, brackets, anchors or wall straps to prevent tip-overs.

Parents as Teachers International Conference 2017

Family Support Webinars
First Wednesday of the month
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

June 7 Engaging Immigrant Families as Educational Partners: Who, What and How
July 12 Community Impact
Aug 9 Co-Parenting

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

PAT Foundational
For new approved users

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