The Center for the Study of Social Policy, among many other organizations, strives to secure better futures for children and their families. They recognize that to be successful in achieving this vision, there must be a significant focus on developing effective and knowledgeable staff. Professional development improves worker satisfaction, increases the likelihood of an organization’s ability to retain staff, and is “a cornerstone for positive outcomes for children and families,” according to Child Welfare Information Gateway. Family support staff tasked with shouldering the strengths and challenges of families they support, often experience diminished capability. High quality professional development can have the opposite effect. It provides professionals with the knowledge and skills that are useful in facing the emotional and mental strenuous challenges of providing family support.

Assuring professional staff is able to perform at their very best requires equipping them with current research, strategies and methodology pertinent to their field. The National Education Association defines professional development as “the process of enhancing one’s personal growth and job skills and improving one’s job performance in order to contribute to outstanding educational results for students.” It is important to note that investing in a professional’s career is not a onetime effort. It is a series of high quality and timely interactions that address evolving skills, knowledge, abilities and attitudes needed to be effective.

As family support workers continue to evolve, supervisors hold the responsibility of enhancing their learning opportunity by providing coaching and reflective supervision. This will enable the professional to increase their capacity to implement practices that collectively strengthen families.

Supervisors who invest in professional learning opportunities for their staff, are investing in the collective development of the families served by their organization. As supervisors partner with their employees to identify professional development opportunities, it is important that they participate in learning that:

• Builds on a foundation of knowledge and skills possessed by the professional learner
• Offer a sequential progressive component in which the learner can continue to expand their learning in particular areas
• Identifies opportunities for professionals to understand the diversity of the families with whom they work
• Integrates the professional into a community of learners
• Aligns with their organization’s mission and vision

Professional Development Opportunities

www.pa-strengthening-families.org
Families possess multiple qualities that allow them to practice resiliency. The upcoming articles will focus on the importance of helping families to lift up these attributes to enhance their ability to be resilient and recover from traumatic events.

Families consist of intertwining relationships in which individuals of the unit lean in and on each other for support. Families undergo various states of well-being and functioning in which these interconnections are tested. These tests or experiences fine tune the family’s ability to be resilient and recover from crisis.

Resiliency and recovery is a process that can be developed at any stage of a family’s existence. Despite wide variations in family structure, rituals and practices, there are a few focal points that are found to be common; the importance of family (with emphasis on kin relationships), striving for satisfying parent-child relationships, family members meeting each other’s needs, and the family as a source of comfort and security. These various focal points feed into key attributes that are integral to a family’s ability to be resilient and recover.

When working with families it is important to help them focus on developing these 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.

Positive Outlook – Overcoming challenges requires a shift in mindset. The ability to frame the solution through a positive and optimistic lens lies at the heart of resilience.

Spirituality – Many families share a value system that guides their processing and handling of stressors. Spirituality reinforces a sense of hope and offers clarity regarding the meaning of the crisis. This often lends a benefit of confidence that there will be a satisfactory outcome.

Family Member Accord – As a result of the crisis, the family’s structure is reevaluated. Individual and collective identities within the family shifts. A new understanding and appreciation of each member for other members of the unit emerges and propels the quality of their overall family functioning forward. Each member learns about their own identity. In the process, they may discover their temperaments and the “goodness of fit” between their self and other family members. Families emerge successfully through a crisis when they remain loving and nurturing regardless of the temperamental similarities and differences. Their accord is not disrupted.

Flexibility – Healthy families learn to adjust and shift the balance of connectedness and separateness through the family life cycle to meet the ever-changing developmental needs. Developmentally appropriate roles are assumed by all members of the family within the context of consistent rules and moderately balanced principles.

These four assets fit together to form a mental framework for approaching a crisis. When families are able to identify the presence and capacity of these assets, they may be better able to face the crisis without disrupting their daily positive routines, habits and experiences that collectively shapes their identity as a family.

Through strength based relationships, family support professionals can partner with families through reflective conversations to not only identify these attributes, but to also discuss ways to maintain them. Helpful questions may include:

- What are your family's strengths? How can they be used in this situation?
- How does your family discuss difficult situations?
- What coping strategies have you used before as a family that have worked?
- In what ways did each family member grow as a result of overcoming a challenge?

These identified strengths can serve as a catalyst for change and a means for families to reach their targeted goals.

Part 2 will cover Communication & Financial Management.

Parents as Teachers: Quality Standards

Parents as Teachers (PAT) Quality Standards is a comprehensive blueprint for high quality services which guides the initial and ongoing implementation of the model. It is comprised of 17 Essential Requirements – outlining the programmatic requirements for model fidelity – and 100 Additional Standards.

PAT affiliates should use the Quality Standards to guide:

- Initial design and start-up of a PAT affiliate
- Ongoing implementation of the PAT model
- Quality assurance and comprehensive assessment of the quality of services and operations
- Continuous quality improvement

Every year, PAT affiliates report data on service delivery, program implementation, and compliance with the Essential Requirements through the Affiliate Performance Report. Affiliates use data from their reports as well as from family feedback and other sources, in an ongoing way for purposes of continuous quality improvement.

Together, the Essential Requirements and Additional Standards form the basis for the PAT Quality Endorsement and Improvement Process (QEIP), which confirms affiliate quality and facilitates continuous quality improvement. PAT affiliates are required to engage in the QEIP in their fourth year of implementation and every five years thereafter.

To earn the Quality Endorsement, affiliates must complete a comprehensive self-study and review process that demonstrates they are meeting or exceeding the PAT Essential Requirements, along with at least 75 of the 100 Additional Standards.

Programs that earn the Quality Endorsement are recognized by the national Parents as Teachers office as exemplary Blue Ribbon Affiliates, delivering high quality services to children and families.

Source: ParentsasTeachers.org

Digging Deeper into the PAT Quality Assurance Guidelines

Annually, the PAT National Center reviews and updates the Quality Assurance Guidelines, a how-to guide for the Parents as Teachers Model. One of the areas elaborated on this year, was the purpose and requirements related to the family-centered assessment (FCA).

Additions or modifications made were:

- Clarification of the purpose of family-centered assessment and meaning of “completion” (p.21)
- Two family-centered assessment tools that meet the PAT required areas (p.22)

After reviewing pages 21 and 22 of the QA Guidelines, please contact the PA State Office if you have further questions regarding the requirements around the use of a family-centered assessment. Remember, the FCA should provide the parent educator a snapshot of the family as a way to effectively plan visits and support the family.

Penelope Tips

Have you hired a new parent educator for your program? Be sure to update your Penelope hierarchy so they have access to the system. Visit the Penelope User Guides page to find the instructions for the “Penelope Hierarchy Tool.”

Check out the new “Parent/Guardian Info” document available in Penelope. Additional fields and refinement of response options have been added to assist with program needs. You will notice the new “Parent/Guardian Info” document has been moved from the Outcomes Assessment tab and relocated on the Documents tab. For more information, refer to the Penelope Tips e-Newsletter sent January 17.

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.
Supporting Families Experiencing Addiction

Dealing with a loved one experiencing addiction can be extremely stressful for a family. As described by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, “Addiction does not begin and end with the abuser; it sends shock waves through an entire family unit.” Families may need a variety of supports as they work to balance the health of their family unit and the needs of the loved one experiencing addiction. Parents who are experiencing addiction may find it difficult to care for their children while at the same time may be in denial about their need for help. When caregivers do admit that they need support, they may be reluctant to seek help due to the stigma associated with addiction or because of fear they may lose their children.

Family support professionals often encounter families grappling with addiction in their programs. It is crucial for those supporting families to learn about how substance abuse can impact parenting and the effects a caregiver’s use may have on children. Although research has shown “that children with parents who abuse alcohol or drugs are more likely to experience abuse or neglect than children in other households,” with adequate support and treatment, families can create safe and nurturing environments for their children.

Below are resources that can help family support professionals learn more about addiction and how to support caregivers and children in their programs. Although many of these resources have a child welfare lens, the information is helpful across family-serving systems.

Parental Substance Use and the Child Welfare System is a resource that is part of the Bulletins for Professionals Series from the Child Welfare Information Gateway. It outlines the effects of substance abuse on families including how it affects parenting behavior and child development. It also addresses service delivery challenges, promising practices for working with families and additional resources.

Using the Protective Factors to Understand Substance Abuse and Recovery is a brief from the Birth Parent National Network facilitated by the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds. Parents from around the country who have experienced addiction and have had involvement with child welfare lend their perspective to what works in programs to support recovery. The brief also discusses how building protective factors relates to recovery.

Pennsylvania’s Centers of Excellence have been established in response to the rise in opioid use in the state. These community-based organizations focus on providing treatment and holistic support to individuals and families experiencing opioid addiction. The website includes helpful infographics about how the centers work as well as a list of centers by county.

The National Association on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare has a variety of resources for programs that serve families experiencing addiction including research briefs, tutorials and archived webinars.


Encouraging Parent-Child Interactions Through PA One Book

Strong, nurturing bonds between parents and children help to keep families safe. One way to build these bonds in families is through reading together. Children’s Trust Fund grantees and Parents as Teachers providers are encouraged to be involved in the PA One Book, Every Young Child initiative.

Help support early literacy during the month of April through Pennsylvania’s One Book Every Young Child! Individuals are invited to be a PA One Book reader during that month at an early learning program in your community.

This year's selection, “Daniel Finds a Poem,” written and illustrated by Micha Archer, is a story about a boy who goes on an adventure through a park trying to find answers to his question, “What is poetry?”

To learn more about how you can be involved in this project, visit PA One Book.
**Safe Kids Corner**

**TV Tip-Over**

Watching the Super Bowl this year? Did you know that Super Bowl Sunday is national TV tip-over day?

Preventing tip-over incidents is easy, inexpensive and only takes 5 minutes. Learn how to secure your TVs and furniture by following these simple steps, and you could protect a child from injury.

- Use sturdy furniture
- Secure your television, when possible, mount flat-screen televisions
- Follow instructions
- Keep CRT televisions low and on a stable surface
- Secure top-heavy furniture
- Remove tempting objects
- Purchase anti-tip devices

**Facts**

- 91% of tip-over fatalities occur in the home.
- 2 out of 3 TV and furniture tip-over fatalities involve toddlers.
- 46% of tip-over fatalities occur in a bedroom.
- Every 15 minutes someone in the U.S. is injured by furniture tip-over.
- On average, one child dies every two weeks when a TV or furniture falls onto him or her.
- An estimated annual average of 33,000 emergency department-treated injuries are associated with TV or furniture tip-overs.

**Medication Safety**

In 2014, over 4 billion prescriptions were filled, which is 125 prescriptions per second. Each year more than 59,000 young children are seen in the emergency department (ED) because they ingested some type of medication. Ninety-five percent of those ED visits are children under the age of 5.

Tips to protect kids from medication:

- Store all medication out of reach and out of sight
- Child proof lids are not a feasible prevention strategy for children
- Check all products that may cause harm, even those that might not be medication
- Use a dosing device that comes with the medication, especially when providing medication to children
- Write clear instructions for other people who may need to administer medication to your child
- Save the Poison Control help number in your phone and in an accessible area in your home (800) 222-1222

**Family Support**

**Family Support Webinars**
First Wednesday of the month
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
Apr 5 Grow Your Program with Group Connections
May 3 Grand Families and Relative Caregivers
June 7 TBD

**Partnering with Teen Parents**
Mar 20-21 Camp Hill, Pa.

**Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers Conference**
May 9-10 Grantville, Pa.

**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.

**PAT Foundational**
For new approved users
Mar 27-29 Homestead, Pa.
May 15-17 Williamsport, Pa.
June 19-21 Camp Hill, Pa.

**PA Foundational 2: 3 Years through Kindergarten**
Apr 24-25 Homestead, Pa.
May 18-19 Williamsport, 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](#)

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