



FAMILY CENTERS

BECAUSE PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES MATTER



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Prevention that Matters

Travis Hutzell, Salisbury Area Family Center, Somerset County

How many times have you heard the phrase “if we could have only gotten to them sooner?” This is referring to the Head Start student with behavioral problems, the new kindergarten student with an undetected speech delay, the parent that complains “it’s the school’s job to teach their child”, or worse yet, the juvenile delinquent standing before a judge to be sentenced.

The common thread with all these situations is early detection and intervention. Where does early childhood education fit into this equation, you ask? The simple fact is that education begins at birth and begins at home. The first and most important teacher in a child’s life is a parent.

If you look at the developmental continuum for children, child development essentially begins at conception. This includes developmental stages such as physiological, bonding, and even social emotional. Children are born ready to learn. The “window of opportunity” for children to learn and develop to their fullest potential is within the first two years...yes, the first two years of life. At what age does a child go to preschool? At what age are children required to enroll in the public school system? The answer is long after that “window of opportunity” has shut! Now look at who has the most influence on a child in the first two years of life?

Family Centers and the **Parents As Teachers (PAT)** home visitation program are the gateway to “getting to parents and children sooner” because families are enrolled from conception up through Kindergarten. The PAT program encourages parents to be their child’s first and best teacher. By building a strong parent child bond early and promoting healthy development, the PAT program ensures that children enter school ready to learn and that parents are engaged in their child’s success. The use of screenings and early detection of delays ensure that children receive the necessary services early, during the most critical stages of development.

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“The [Family Center] Parents as Teachers Program ensures that children enter school ready to learn and that parents are engaged in their child’s success.” Travis Hutzell

Changing Lives

Lee Sizemore, McKean County Family Centers

The Family Center Initiative is sponsored by the Department of Welfare's Office of Children, Youth and Families (DPW/OCYF) and has been in existence for two decades. There are currently 31 Family Center contracts funded through the DPW/OCYF line item called "Community-Based Family Centers".

Family Centers are contracted to either school districts or county government in 28 counties in Pennsylvania. Each is designed to help network families into communities so they are less reliant on public services. Families are involved in program planning through local parent/community councils that help develop resources and services offered out of Family Centers.

Every Family Center is tailored to their community, but each offers a core set of services through the **Parents as Teachers (PAT)** home visitation program, a high-quality program federally recognized as evidence-based and effective. Parent workshops/classes, support groups, family events, and various prevention activities supplement core services offered. Local communities generate match funds in order to offer a full array of supports to families.

PA Family Centers are considered a child abuse prevention strategy, since core service through the **Parents as Teachers** home visitation program helps families organize, focus on the needs of their young children, and network into community supports. Family Centers are also considered an early learning strategy since they engage parent-child interactions that increase developmental skills in young children. Both strategies lead to positive outcomes for children and families and reduce costs for communities.

Family Centers are a valuable community resource. While Family Centers target high risk populations, any family can receive Family Center services.

Family Centers are an **Early Learning strategy**:

- Parents are a child's first and best teacher. Family Centers use the **Parents as Teachers** home visitation model, a high-quality program federally recognized as evidence-based and meeting rigorous standards for effectiveness.
- Family Centers align with the goals of the Pennsylvania early learning standards and support positive child development, school readiness and parent engagement.

Family Centers as a critical **Child Welfare strategy**:

- Pennsylvania's 5-year Child and Family Services Plan (2010-2014) includes Family Centers as part of identified strategies to promote "strength-based family reunification services" and well as "increased engagement of fathers."



PARENT TESTIMONIALS

Family Centers across the State provide parents and communities with the resources and supports they need to raise healthy and happy children. Supports include evidence-based home visiting through Parents as Teachers (PAT) and increased protective factors against child abuse and neglect. This spring, families supported by centers were in jeopardy of losing access to these critical resources. Families are speaking out to help legislators understand why these services are an important investment in their lives, their children, and the future of Pennsylvania. Here's what they have to say:

Alissa, mother of 2:

When we first started with the center, I had postpartum depression. One of the center staff Heather helped me a lot. She did not ask if I wanted to come to the center. She told me what time to be ready and picked me up for the programs. She made me get out of the house to the program and to doctor appointments. My life would be much different if I hadn't made that phone call. I honestly believe that coming here has saved my life. My husband comes to the fatherhood program and enjoys it. I volunteer at the center because it gives me something to do. The people are good and I enjoy working with kids too. Family Support brings families together and in this day that's rare. At the center, families can become very close and there are activities for us to do together.

PARENT TESTIMONIALS (continued)

Jon, father of 3:

Like many couples, my wife and I ran into some problems and I became a single-parent household. The Family Support Center was right there for me. They stepped in with the afterschool program until I got off work. I was able to talk and get support from parents and staff. My wife and I eventually got back together again with the help of the center. They never judged or took sides—they just listened. I became more involved in my center and served in many leadership roles in the Parent Council, including President at one time.

Krystal, mother of 5

I have five children between the ages of 2 and 9. My Family Center is helpful because it enables me to identify ways to teach my children. There may be areas I can expand on or ways to review things I may have forgotten about. My children currently receive home visits from Kelly. They are excited to learn. They look forward to interactive play. It is good for both of us because they are learning and having fun. I think the center is beneficial for families. There are many programs that they offer. The people who work there are nice and encourage us to become more involved. They offer a lot that can make a family aware that there are people who care for them.

“For twenty years, Family Centers have been a vital part of meeting the needs of children, families, and communities. Your support is necessary to preserve these high-quality, evidence based services across Pennsylvania.”

Lee Sizemore,
McKean County Family Centers

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- Investments in prevention save on expensive out-of-home placements. In Allegheny County, the average cost per child in family support is \$1,188. The average cost per child for foster care is \$16,907 and for residential/group placement is \$64,148.
- The **Fatherhood Initiative** in Family Centers is a key strategy to help young fathers learn how to be both nurturers and providers for their children.
- Many Family Centers also partner with local child welfare agencies to implement **Time Limited Family Reunification** efforts.

For twenty years, Family Centers have been a vital part of meeting the needs of children, families, and communities. Your support is necessary to preserve these high-quality, evidence based services across Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania Family Centers: A Focus on Quality

Lee Sizemore, McKean County Family Centers

“Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren’t used to an environment where quality is expected.”

Steve Jobs coined it, and the Pennsylvania Family Centers are following his advice and incorporating improvements in the Parents as Teachers Program.

All Family Centers in PA offer the Parents as Teachers program as part of their outreach and core mission. Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an evidence-based home visiting model providing parenting education and family support for families in vulnerable situations. PAT services are available to a range of families with high needs—not just first time parents, pregnant parents or teen parents—and services are offered throughout early childhood, from prenatal to kindergarten entry.

Parents as Teachers is an approved home visiting model meeting the evidence-based criteria of the federal Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV). The MIECHV program is designed to strengthen and improve outcomes for at-risk families with young children and their communities and are a necessary part of the early learning continuum.

New PAT curriculum changes align the program with high quality practices required through the MIECHV program. Below are just a few examples of practices being implemented in the PA Family Centers.

- Family-centered assessment and goal planning with use of the Life Skills Progression Tool, a scale that assesses family functioning in

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seven areas and provides a comprehensive understanding of the growth of the family across a spectrum of skills.

- New hearing screening practices utilizing Otoacoustic emissions technology to detect the cochlear status of neonates, infants and developmentally delayed children that are too young and/or inappropriate for hearing assessment using other methods like tone-testing.
- Use of the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale to identify and refer parents for treatment of maternal depression.
- Use of the DOVE, Domestic Violence Evaluation, to identify and refer victims of intimate partner violence to safety resources treatment options that can help stabilize their family.
- A new curriculum approach requiring every home visitor to be retrained in order to implement coaching techniques and quality improvement practices focused on parent-child interaction, development-centered parenting and family well-being.

The 31 state-funded Family Centers in Pennsylvania are proud to offer quality services in 28 counties. "Family Centers/Parents as Teachers support families, strengthen the value of home, and are an important ingredient in the early learning continuum along- side Childcare and Pre-K," said Lee Sizemore, Director of the McKean County Family Centers.



Nelly Arevalo-Jimenez,

MCHC Kennett Square Family Center Director

"Pennsylvania's Family Centers help children by laying the foundation for a child's lifetime success by introducing children to preschool learning while teaching the child's parents how to do the same. Using a holistic approach, Family Centers continue to support families and children throughout their development as they face and overcome barriers to their success."

PARENT TESTIMONIALS

(continued)

Dana, mother of 3

I have been involved with my center for 6½ years. The center has been a great support for my children and me. I celebrated five years clean this past January. The staff at my center was instrumental in finding a residential treatment program that permitted me to keep my children with me. That was the beginning of my journey to be drug-free. At the center I participated in parenting classes that taught me how to raise my children in a better way than I had been doing. They taught me how to prepare healthy foods and they taught me how to have patience and handle situations differently.

Colleen, mother of 2

I was referred to my Family Center by a social worker at the hospital. I was in my third trimester and had nothing for my baby. I had no job or hope of money to buy baby items. Needless to say, I was scared. I called the center and they helped me 110%. The staff members are angels. They provided me with the resources I needed, took me to appointments, and even helped me with my oldest child's needs. A grant from them provided me with furniture that I would not have had. When the baby came a few months later I had everything I needed. After the birth of my child, they were still there when I needed something. This is a place of hope. It helps those who need it most and shows them a silver lining. My community and others desperately need places like this to stay open.

Siedha, mother of 2

I relocated to a new area and was in need of support (as single mother at the time). I was referred by my college advisor to the center and have been a part of the family ever since. My children participate in afterschool, playgroup, and many other programs that have helped them learn respect, caring, and sharing with others and themselves. I love being a member; it is a great place

MEET OUR TEAM:

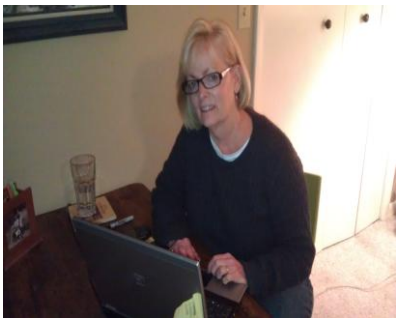
Contact one of the **Family Center Network Regional Representatives** for more information about Family Centers:



Lee Sizemore, Northwest Region

McKean County, PA, Lee@mckeanfamilyresources.net, 1.814.887.5591

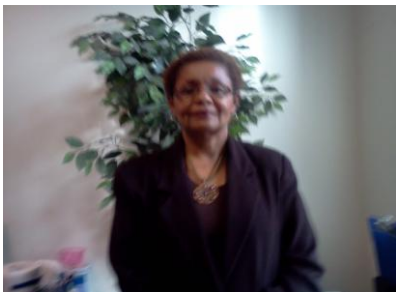
Lee has been the Director of the McKean County Family Centers for 15 years, and Director of Infant/Toddler Early Intervention Provider services and substance abuse prevention programs for the past 22 years. She brings expertise in service integration, rural outreach, and the Early Learning Continuum to the Family Center Network. In her free time she enjoys snow skiing, kayaking and martial arts.



Allison Williams, Northeast Region

Columbia County, PA, awilliams@columbiapa.org, 1.570.387.9086

Allison has been with Columbia County Family Centers since 1999 and Director since 2005. Allison focuses on prevention via a strong relationship with children and youth services and the courts. The Family Center brings PAT, Fatherhood, Parenting Classes, Time Limited Family Reunification, Family Group Decision-Making, Baby Basics For Dads, Adolescent Workshops, Budgeting Workshops and Child-Focused Parenting (for divorcing parents) to those most at-risk for abuse/neglect.



Pat Dixon, Southeast Region

Lancaster County, PA, pdixon@caplanc.org, 1.717.431.1027

Pat has been a Family Center Director for the past nine years. Pat has focused on low income urban, Latino populations. Through her leadership the Family Center brings Fatherhood Engagement, Family Reunification, Nutrition Education and Parenting Classes conducted in Spanish. Pat looks forward to free time in order to travel and spend time with family.



Larry Klinger, Southwest Region

Allegheny County, PA Larry.klinger@aiu3.net, 1.412.394.5955

Larry has been working in for the Allegheny Intermediate Unit for the past ten years; he has been the Program Manager for the Family and Community Education Services (FACES) programs for the past 5 years, which includes ten Family Centers in Allegheny County. He has a background in working with children with special needs and has a focus on low-income Urban, Latino populations. Larry also served 22 years in the military and brings elements of supporting military families and fatherhood engagement to the Family Center Network. In his free time Larry can be found in the great outdoors with his family, hiking, camping or skiing.



“Working together with families to prevent child abuse, increase positive parenting, and promote healthy parent-child development”

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