



PENNSYLVANIA
Family Center Network
healthy development . school readiness . community connection

Pennsylvania Community Based Family Centers

In 1992, the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services were charged with creating a new level of integration, coordination and enhancement of services for Pennsylvania children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the departments developed the **Pennsylvania Community Based Family Center Initiative** as an efficient way of providing needed supports and community services to help families and their children build on the protective factors that result in positive outcomes in improved health, education and economic self-sufficiency.

Each of the current **34 Pennsylvania Community Based Family Centers** offers a core set of services designed around the evidence-based home visiting model, **Parents as Teachers (PAT)**, a high-quality program federally recognized as meeting rigorous standards for effectiveness in the reduction of incidents of child abuse and neglect, increased school readiness and increased parental knowledge of child development.

Parents as Teachers promotes the optimal early development, learning and health of young children by supporting and engaging their parents and caregivers. **PAT** programs serve families from pregnancy through kindergarten. Programs encourage parents to participate in advisory committees and provide opportunities for leadership in the community. Certified Parent Educators work with families over time to promote a parent's role as their child's first and most influential teacher.

Families who enroll in **PAT** programs participate in home visits that engage families in parent-child activities, discussions on child development and parenting topics, as well as family well-being issues. Families may also choose to participate in parent/child group activities, family goal setting and connection to community resources.

Community Based Family Centers are designed to reflect the unique needs of the communities where they serve and often include programs that promote adult education, family literacy, fatherhood programs, family and individual counseling, youth development and after-school programs, employment and training assistance, supporting families with substance abuse issues and parent leadership opportunities. Many centers work closely with their local court systems, Centers of Excellence, probation offices and county Children and Youth Agencies.

Family Centers also motivate and facilitate fathers to become more involved in their children's lives by focusing on services that promote strong families through personal and parental responsibility in their Fatherhood Initiatives. Fatherhood services are consistent with **Family Center** principles and build on existing core services. All fatherhood projects include outreach services, individual and group support, adult education and job skills training.



PENNSYLVANIA
Parents as Teachers®



A true measure of success is how a program functions during a crisis. The recent COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the tenacity of the Pennsylvania Community Based Family Centers. With very little warning or preparation time, all of the regions' Parents as Teachers (PAT) programs immediately had their virtual doors open. Families experienced no interruption of service.

Family Centers were originally designed to be a new way of doing business and, as such, are adaptable to what our communities need. Facebook, Zoom and many other virtual platforms were utilized to deliver home visits, group connection and necessary screenings.

Regional Family Center Directors shared insight and successes between programs regarding common needs, such as access to food sources, childcare, mental health/emotional support, internet and cell phone connectivity. With input from both the National PAT Office and the Pennsylvania PAT state office, Family Centers have been successfully conducting home visits and finding solutions to multiple barriers experienced by families.

~ Sheri Valimont, Northwest Region Family Center Director



NORTHEAST REGION

- **Columbia County Family Center**
(Montour and Columbia Counties)
- **Greater Nanticoke Area Family Center**
(Luzerne County)
- **Pittston Area Family Center** (Luzerne County)
- **Outreach – Center for Community Resources**
(Lackawanna County)
- **Wayne County Family Center**
(Wayne County)



For some families, social distancing started before COVID-19. With a medically fragile baby, this mom was grateful for the continued support of Parents as Teachers and the **Columbia County Family Center**. Virtual visits made it possible to stay connected to information and resources that support families.

At **Outreach – Center for Community Resources**, families and their children are “moving forward” during this time of uncertainty. The critical community support families received, and continue to receive, helps fill important gaps in resources until families can connect independently to available community resources. Individuals, businesses and civic groups are reaching out and generously providing bags of groceries to families in need in addition to thoughtful and kind monetary donations from a local church and others which help provide diapers, formula and wipes to families.



We are all looking forward to brighter days, but the theme of our April learning resources was “April Showers.” Within two weeks of PA’s Stay-At-Home order, the **Wayne County Family Center** made porch deliveries of learning resources, literacy kits and activity ideas and supplies to all enrolled families.

One mother has been working at a health care facility through the COVID-19 pandemic, sometimes working 12-hour days. After completing a post-work decontamination routine, she always finds time to spend with her young daughter. As a parent who has completely engaged with her Parent Educator during the past 2.5 years, this mom has made significant positive changes to improve her life and the life of her daughter. Mom utilizes the skills learned through the home visiting program and reads, completes crafts, plays games and provides fun activities to teach her daughter colors, counting, body parts and animal identification. This mother’s efforts are paying off, as evidenced through her daughter’s high ASQ scores.

Pennsylvania Community Based Family Centers maintain a strong presence in their communities to support families and to help them thrive. While offices are closed, family centers provide full-service programs with model fidelity.

Teen mom finds support and success through Family Center programs.

A Parent Educator worked with a mother for more than five years through Early Head Start. Mom was a teenager, still in high school. She formed a strong coaching relationship with her home visitor. After graduated from high school and moving herself and her young daughter into their own apartment, she went on to earn her childcare credentials and continued to schedule home visits in the evening when she was home from work.

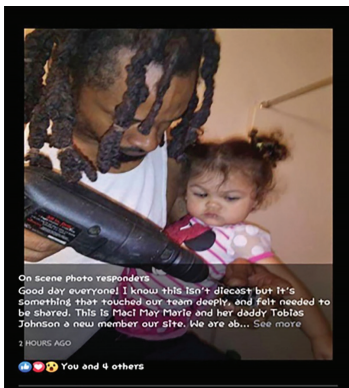
Eventually, this young mother began a new, stable relationship, and her income increased to the point that her child was no longer eligible for Early Head Start. Fast forward to a year later, mom called her former Parent Educator to announce that she is pregnant and wants to start receiving home visits again. As it turns out, the Parent Educator was the second person mom told that she was pregnant; Dad was first.

NORTHWEST REGION

- **Allegheny Clarion Valley Family Center** (Clarion County)
- **Cameron County Family Center** (Cameron County)
- **CenClear/Clearfield County Family Center** (Clearfield County)
- **Children's Advocacy Center/Lawrence County Family Center** (Lawrence County)
- **Erie Family Center** (Erie County)
- **Farrell Family Center** (Mercer County)
- **The Guidance Center/McKean County Family Center** (McKean County)
- **Mercer County Family Center/Greenville Family Center** (Mercer County)
- **Mercer County Family Center/Sharon Family Center** (Mercer County)

"Having the consistency of working has been a protective factor in my life and has helped to minimize the shock of traumatic events that some families are experiencing. I believe that our continued presence in supporting families has been a protective factor for them as well."

~ Family Development Specialist



Quotes from Parent Educators:

- "Dad sent pictures of things he is doing with his children during this time."
- "The children are enjoying meeting my pets and seeing me interact with them during virtual visits."
- "We were able to make the transition from home visiting to virtual visiting with minimal interruption of services."
- "I helped a mom find homeschooling pre-school material for her child, including the family center's access to the My Big World Scholastic website. She was very happy with the resources and said they helped tremendously."

"It is scary to have a baby during this time (COVID-19)."

~Parent

Home visiting staff support moms and their babies by providing virtual home visits, connection to needed resource and post-delivery visits to give their babies the best chance for a healthy delivery and a healthy life.

The **Mercer County Family Center** has not faltered during this unprecedented time, rising to the challenges and ensuring that families and their needs are still their number one priority.

Since the first days of the pandemic, **McKean County Family Center** has been active in family and community engagement. Staff from the Home Visiting Expansion Program volunteer to assemble food packages for the elderly.



SOUTHEAST REGION

- **Allentown City School District Family Center** (Lehigh County)
- **Berks Community Action Program Family Center** (Berks County)
- **Bethlehem Area School District/ Marvine Family Center** (Northampton County)
- **Carson Valley Children's Aid/Norristown Family Center** (Montgomery County)
- **Community Action Partnership of Lancaster County** (Lancaster County)
- **Community Youth and Women's Alliance/ Coatesville Family Center** (Chester County)
- **Delaware County Family Center** (Delaware County)
- **Family Services of Bucks County/ Kelly Family Center** (Bucks County)
- **Family Services/Pottstown Family Center** (Montgomery County)
- **Maternal Child Health/Kennett Square Family Center** (Chester County)
- **Perry County Family Center** (Perry County)
- **Tri-County Community Action Family Center** (Dauphin County)



"I'm just grateful for all the Pottstown Family Center has helped me with." ~Parent

The **Pottstown Family Center** staff was successful in reaching out to organizations such as the You Are Worth it Foundation and Cradles to Crayons for donations of cleaning supplies. Clients pay it forward by donating clothes and/or food outgrown by their children to other families.



A bingo game provided by **Community Action Partnership of Lancaster** helps alleviate stress for the Valencia Family.

The Valencia Family has grown so much since they started with the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. Mom always participates in the home visiting activities to support her children's learning and development, but also to keep strengthening their family well-being. Recently, after playing a virtual game of bingo with her children, mom shared the following statement at our next virtual home visit:

"These bingos were like therapy for me. Every time I feel anxious, scared, or worried from watching too much news, I play this game with my children and feel better. Thank you so much for helping my family and me stay sane during this time of isolation! No one says parenting is easy, but with encouragement, good attitude, and support from my Parent Educator at the Lancaster Family Center, I do feel better!"



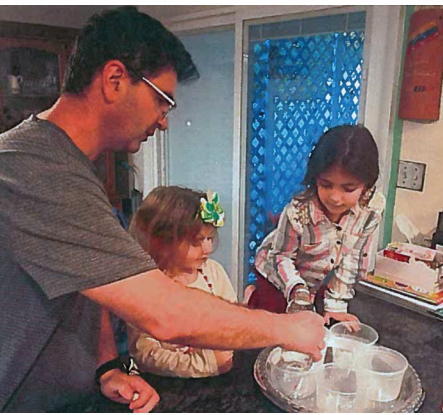
Parents are designers of their children's work and supporters of their learning. Parent Educators support parents in this role by showing parents how to use everyday objects found in the home to make fun learning activities.

Parents are their children's first and most influential teachers. Home visits focus on promoting a strong parent/child attachment while coaching parents on learning activities that promote their child's development.

SOUTHWEST REGION

- **Allegheny Intermediate Unit/FACES**
(Allegheny County)
 - Duquesne Family Center
 - East Allegheny Family Center
 - Highlands Family Center
 - Latino Family Center
 - Lincoln Park Family Center
 - Steel Valley Family Center
- **Allegheny Intermediate Unit/FACES II**
(Allegheny County)
 - Clairton Family Center
 - McKeesport Family Center
 - Sto-Rox Family Center
 - Wilkinsburg Family Center
- **Community Action Partnership for Somerset County/Salisbury Area Family Center**
(Somerset County)
- **Family Centers of Bedford County**
(Bedford County)
- **Family Resource Center at the United Way of Blair County** (Blair County)
- **Fulton County Family Partnerships**
(Fulton County)
- **Greene County Family Center**
(Greene County)
- **Monessen Family Center**
(Westmoreland County)

“As a single dad and a participant of the **AIU Steel Valley Family Center**, I am really enjoying all the programs offered via Zoom and all the prompt text messages about food and other resources in the community during the pandemic, as well as the socialization and the ability to talk to staff and fellow parents weekly. I personally attend two to three groups on the Zoom app. I stay in touch with my Parent Educator at least once a week. I feel the Center is a great asset for my children and me. Thank you so much for being there for my family”



At the **Highlands Family Center**, Parent Educators have continued to facilitate two Parents as Teachers' home visits with every family on their caseload each month via FaceTime and Zoom meetings. During the visits, staff provides parents with information on child development, dealing with trauma and helping children cope during this challenging time. Staff is also calling families each week to check in on them and to offer one on one support. A parent shared with their Parent Educator, “I do not have any real family to lean on; you guys at the center are my family now.”

The **Latino Family Center** continues to support families while working from home. Here is an example of a Parent Educator (Antonia) doing a virtual home visit with a father and his two daughters, focusing on child development.



Allegheny County has some of the highest positive COVID-19 cases in the state of Pennsylvania. We are operating our program in a dependable and secure way, keeping workers and families healthy and safe at all times.

The community served by **Steel Valley Family Center** has really come together during COVID-19. The mayor has formed a community partnership. The support of community partners has helped us meet the needs of many families.

The number of calls we are receiving for tangible assistance is increasing daily. During the closure, we are continuing to offer concrete support in times of need to enrolled families as well as other community members by distributing weekly food boxes, formula, diapers, baby food, household items and hygiene items to those in need.