

Family Support NEWS BRIEF

A publication of

 CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



Reframing Our Messages and Practices to Prevent Child Maltreatment

April marks the recognition of National Child Abuse Prevention Month in the United States. During this time, many family-serving programs engage in public awareness campaigns and events to remind the community that we all have a role in preventing maltreatment and supporting positive outcomes for families and children.

There has been a growing discussion in the field about the language we use to discuss prevention of maltreatment and childhood adversity. Many of us in family support are familiar with the idea of shifting language and perspectives. The Strengthening

Families™ approach urges us to shift from focusing on deficits to strengths in families. The Protective Factors Framework helps us identify and build on caregiver strengths. Each protective factor acts as a buffer to stress and helps to actively promote well-being in families. The shift to a strengths-based approach changed the way we support families. How might a shift in the language we use related to prevention move our field forward and encourage all to take responsibility for the well-being of children in our community?

In the report “Reframing Childhood Adversity: Promoting Upstream Approaches,” published February 2021,

Dr. Julie Sweetland urges, “at a high level, child adversity must be framed as a public issue, a preventable problem and a solvable problem.”^{1 (p.5)} The report goes on to explore how we can shift language to ensure that we avoid some of the pitfalls that can occur in traditional prevention messaging and create communications that encourage the public, practitioners and policy makers to move the conversation of prevention upstream.

A shift in language does not ignore the issues of child maltreatment, but rather it frames it in such a way that we can see our role in supporting children and families to thrive. We focus on the

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“human potential” of children rather than solely on their vulnerability while acknowledging that we have a “shared obligation to children” through our “collective responsibility” as a society.¹ (p.10) It recognizes parents and caregivers for their integral role in childhood, while acknowledging that they are not the only adults in a child’s life responsible for their well-being.

Shifts in framing also encourages us to consider how environments, systems and policies impact families — specifically the possibility of families experiencing a great deal of stressors. Sweetland suggests using a metaphor of being overloaded “to describe families experiencing significant stressors such as financial insecurity, housing instability or hunger.”¹ (p.17) This reframing can be particularly useful when utilized in discussion around neglect so that families and communities are not stigmatized.

Two of the six strategies offered by the report are discussed above. Careful attention to each will help the field to shift its messaging. Sweetland summarizes this need saying, “If we can embrace a common narrative structure — one that starts with a shared value, centers explicit explanation and highlights a concrete solution — framing research suggests that we will continue to make incredible progress in public support for the robust, forward-thinking systems and structures we need to prevent childhood adversity and promote the health and well-being of children, youth and families.”¹ (p.28)

In addition to the reframing of messaging, a growing body of evidence supports the idea that positive experiences and robust relationships can promote healthy development and well-being even in the presence of adverse childhood experiences. The Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences (HOPE) approach outlines four building blocks “that promote positive experiences that help children grow into healthy, resilient adults.”² (p.2) These building blocks include relationships, safe, equitable, stable environments, social and civic engagement, and emotional growth. We can frame our messages and practices to reflect the importance of these building blocks. Furthermore, we can encourage program leaders and policy makers to focus on creating environments and opportunities for children to have positive experiences in these areas.

Early relational health is another example of an effort to consider how positive experiences in childhood impact child development. In this case, positive experiences occur in the context of foundational relationships. According to the Center for the Study of Social Policy, the term “early relational health” refers to the concept that “healthy and positive child development emerges best in the context of nurturing, warm and responsive early parent/caregiver child relationships, when children are surrounded by safe communities with strong trust and social connectedness.”³ These crucial relationships may start in the home with the child’s caregivers, but

they do not end there. This approach considers how the community is responsible for child well-being too. This work explores how systems — specifically healthcare, mental and behavioral health, family support, and early care and education — can elevate the importance of child/caregiver relationships. Part of what systems can do is to seek to eliminate stressors and barriers that shift caregivers’ attention from building a strong nurturing relationship with their children.⁴

This April, as you commemorate Child Abuse Prevention Month, consider how you frame your messaging, focus on supporting families, and highlight how positive experiences can influence children and families. How we discuss prevention and the strategies we use to prevent maltreatment can act as a galvanizing force in our communities that centers positive relationships, focuses on creating systems that are responsive to families, and shares responsibility for the positive outcomes and well-being of our community’s children.

Resources

[Reframing Childhood Adversity: Promoting Upstream Approaches](#)

[HOPE — Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences](#)

[Advancing Early Relational Health: Transforming Child Health Care and Early Childhood System Building](#)

Sources

1 Sweetland, J. (2021). Reframing childhood adversity. Washington, DC: FrameWorks Institute.

2 HOPE (2021). Healthy outcomes from positive experiences. Retrieved from: <https://positiveexperience.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/HOPE-1-pager.pdf> 3/11/2022.

3 Center for the Study of Social Policy (2022). Approach. Retrieved from: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/advancing-early-relational-health/#story> 3/14/2022.

4 Center for the Study of Social Policy (2022). Frequently asked questions about ERH. Retrieved from: <https://cssp.org/our-work/project/advancing-early-relational-health/#frequently-asked-questions-about-erh> 3/14/2022.



PENNSYLVANIA Parents as Teachers®

Welcome to our monthly article to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Pennsylvania PAT. This month we will focus our efforts on child abuse prevention.

The research article below may be helpful in understanding the connection between PAT and child abuse prevention.

Preventing Child Maltreatment: Examination of an Established Statewide Home-Visiting Program

Research published in the May 2018 edition of "Child Abuse & Neglect: The International Journal" found that the Parents as Teachers® evidence based home visiting model demonstrates a significant decrease in cases of child maltreatment when home visiting services are delivered through a scaled-up, statewide home visiting program.

The research represents one of the largest studies in the U.S. conducted to investigate the impact of home visiting on child maltreatment, including nearly 8,000 families.

[Read article >>](#)

Save the Date: Pennsylvania PAT Rally Wednesday, June 15 State Capitol Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania PAT will host a rally at the State Capitol. We hope to see you there! Stay tuned for more information.

Succession Planning for Everyone in Your Organization

Wednesday, April 20, 2022, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. ET

Succession planning is critical when we desire for the work to live on long after we leave. Succession planning has often been discussed for executive and leadership staff. In truth, every team member wants to know that your clients and customers will continue to benefit from your collective work.

Topics:

- Establishing the culture needed for succession planning to happen
- The various systems, lists and documents that may be needed for the best possible outcomes
- How to fit the needed documentation into your weekly work plan so it does not become onerous only during times of transition

Presenter: Anne L. Gingerich, MSW, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO)

[Register for webinar >>](#)



Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Conference — Registration is Now Open!

Tuesday, May 3 – Thursday, May 5, 2022 | Virtual

Get **READY** for three days of exciting keynotes, engaging workshop presenters and networking opportunities.

SET aside time to learn and engage with your peers.

GO back to your communities rejuvenated and equipped with strategies to support yourself and innovations for working with families.

This conference serves as the annual gathering for Parents as Teachers providers and the Children's Trust Fund Annual Meeting.

Those working to create environments in which families build the Strengthening Families Protective Factors are invited to attend.

[Register for conference >>](#)

National Child Abuse Prevention Month Resources

As you plan events and messaging to commemorate Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month, explore these resources for information, videos, social media messaging and more.

Child Welfare Information Gateway National Child Abuse Prevention Month webpages include a resource guide, conversation guides, tip sheets for families, social media content, and videos.

- [Child Abuse Prevention Month](#)
- [2021/2022 Resource Prevention Guide](#)
- [Outreach Toolkit: Communication Tools to Spread the Word](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention VetoViolence webpages contain great resources related to prevention of child abuse and neglect. Their technical package provides information and resources for preventing maltreatment at the programmatic, community and policy levels.

- [VetoViolence](#)
- [Prevention Information](#)
- [Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: A Technical Package for Policy, Norm and Programmatic Activities](#)

Prevent Child Abuse America webpages provides images and examples of social media messaging as well as a resource library of tip sheets, reports and more.

- [Growing a Better Tomorrow for All Children, Together](#)
- [Social Media Content](#)
- [Resource Library](#)

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance hosts activities and events throughout the month of April. Their website has myriad resources and information about upcoming training opportunities.

- [Events and Activities](#)
- [Training Opportunities](#)

Prevent Child Abuse Pennsylvania has resources for parents and programs to prevent child abuse.

- [Pinwheels for Prevention](#)
- [Tips for Parents](#)

Parents as Teachers Online Courses

Foundational 2: 3 Years Through Kindergarten

Monday, April 25 – Friday, April 29
Monday, May 23 – Friday, May 27
Monday, June 20 – Friday, June 24

Foundational and Model Implementation

For new parent educators and new supervisors of affiliate programs

Monday, May 9 – Friday, May 20
Monday, June 6 – Friday, June 17

Register for courses at the National Parents as Teachers' [training website](#).

If you have any questions regarding registration for PAT trainings, please contact [Jennifer Esposito](#).

Family Support Webinar

Please note that we will not host a Family Support webinar in May. We hope to see you at the Strengthening Families Conference.

The Family Support webinar will resume June 1, 2022.

Share Your Story

Do you have some success stories or program news that you would like to share in future News Briefs? If so, please email [the Family Support team](#) or join us online at the [Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers Facebook](#) page or at the [Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Facebook](#) page.



Family Support Team

Family Support at 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

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Children's Trust Fund

Strengthening Families

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Safe Kids Corner



Bike Safety

There are so many great reasons to ride your bike: It offers fun, freedom and exercise, and it is good for the environment. We want kids and families to ride their bikes as much as possible. Here are a few tips so that you will be safe while you do so.

Hard Facts

Properly fitted helmets can reduce the risk of head injuries by at least 45%, yet less than half of children 14 and under usually wear a bike helmet.

Top Tips

- Wear a properly fitted helmet. It is the best way to prevent head injuries and death.
- Ride on the sidewalk when you can. If not, ride in the same direction as traffic as far on the right-hand side as possible.
- Use **hand signals** and follow the rules of the road. Be predictable by making sure you ride in a straight line and do not swerve between cars.
- Wear bright colors and use lights, especially when riding at night and in the morning. Reflectors on your clothes and bike will help you be seen.
- Ride with your children. Stick together until you are comfortable that your kids are ready to ride on their own.

Source

[Safe Kids Worldwide](http://SafeKidsWorldwide)