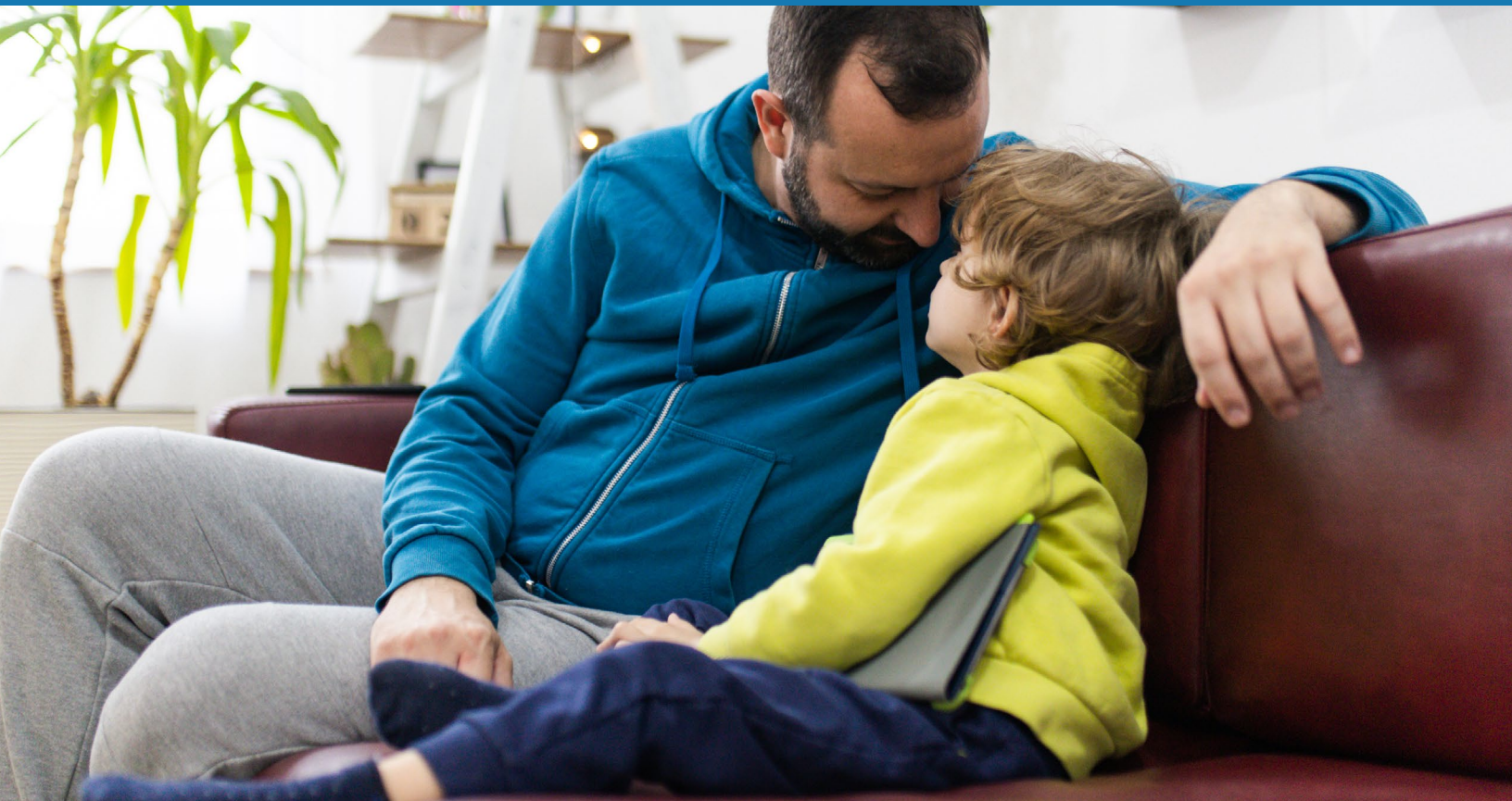


# Family Support NEWS BRIEF

A publication of



CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



## Supporting Caregivers to Talk With Their Children About Tragedies And Violence in the Community

Talking with children about tragedy, violence, and loss can be a daunting task for parents, caregivers, and family support staff. Children may have questions about what they are seeing on the news, hearing (or overhearing) from others, or just sense that something is out of sorts based on their caregivers' behaviors. Adults might wonder what is appropriate to share with children of different age groups or if they should talk about it at all.

A good practice for the adults in children's lives is to check in with themselves first. We are all impacted by

tragedy. Acknowledging your feelings and thoughts will help to ensure "you are calm and grounded during the conversation"<sup>1</sup> with children. Being there for children and supporting them in uncertain times is incredibly important even if we do not have all the answers. As Fred Rogers reminds us, "in times of stress, the best thing we can do for our children (and for each other) is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers."<sup>2</sup>

After checking in with ourselves, we can consider how we will discuss the topic with children. The American

Academy of Pediatrics recommends that those who care for children should "filter information about the event and present it in a way that their child can understand, adjust to and handle in a healthy way."<sup>3</sup> Checking in with children, even the very young ones, to find out what they know or have heard is an important first step. Acknowledging and validating the child's feelings shows that they are loved and always able to share when they are angry, sad, or scared. Caregivers should consider how to frame any additional information shared and ensure that it is developmentally appropriate. Reminding children that they are safe and loved is crucial.

*continued on page 2*

The resources below have tips and strategies for children of all ages and abilities. As family support staff, consider how you might use these resources to support parents as they have conversations with their children.

- **Parents as Teachers** providers have access to several resources within the curriculum that may support these conversations. A few examples in the Foundational Curriculum include:
  - **Parent Educator Resources**
    - Disasters, Tragedies, and Traumatic Events
    - Trauma and Families
  - **Parent Handouts**
    - Helping Your Child Cope After a Crisis
    - Pretend Play After Scary Events
- The Fred Rogers Institute has [resources](#) that can help caregivers discuss difficult events with their children including death, cancer, and troubling events in the news.
- The California Training Institute provides professional learning opportunities for family support staff. A recent blog post [Resources to Help Children and Families Process Mass Violence](#) has links to excellent

resources on talking with children about frightening events.

- HealthChildren.org is an initiative of the American Academy of Pediatrics and provides resources on various child health topics. The Emotional Wellness section has several articles on [talking with children about traumatic events](#) and how to support children to [build resilience](#).
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network provides resources related to child trauma available in multiple languages. Specific information and resources about different types of trauma (including community violence) and how to support children can be found in [Trauma Types](#).
- National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement provides [resources](#) to support children through crisis and loss. Guides cover a range of topics from natural disasters, death, and violence in communities.
- Sesame Street in Communities has resources in the [Difficult Times & Tough Talks](#) section to support caregivers to help their children cope in tough situations and to build resilience.



## References

- 1 The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2022). Talking to children when scary things happen. Retrieved from: <https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/talking-to-children-when-scary-things-happen.pdf>
- 2 Fred Rogers Institute (n.d.). Talking with children about difficult things in the news. Retrieved from: <https://www.fredrogersinstitute.org/files/resources/7/respondingtodifficultcurrentevents2022.pdf>
- 3 Schonfeld, D. (2022). How to talk with kids about tragedies and other traumatic news events. Retrieved from: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Talking-To-Children-About-Tragedies-and-Other-News-Events.aspx>



## Family Support Webinar

### Supporting Families: How to Talk to Youth About Difficult Topics

Wednesday, Sept. 7

10-11:15 a.m. (EDT)

Having conversations with youth about difficult topics, including violence in our communities, can be one of the most difficult things we can do as adults. This session will provide information on why it is important to have those conversations, how our youth's brains are impacted by violence in the community and what they see on social media, and concrete ways to support youth as you have these conversations.

**Presenter:** Dana Milakovic, PsyD, NCSP, Mental Wellness and Trauma Specialist, Office for Safe Schools, Pennsylvania Department of Education

[Register >>](#)



# Save The Date: Pennsylvania PAT and United Kingdom PAFT Connection

On Tuesday, Nov. 8 from 9-10:30 a.m. EST, Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers – USA (PA PAT) and Parents as First Teachers – United Kingdom (PAFT) will meet to commemorate our 30-year anniversaries!

Additional details and registration information are forthcoming.

## About Pennsylvania Parents as Teacher in the United States

The Parents as Teachers (PAT) evidence-based home visiting model was introduced in Pennsylvania as one of the components of Family Centers as “a new way of doing business” – a philosophy, a process, and a place. Beginning with 13 pilot sites in 1992 and 1993, the number of Family Centers with PAT programs grew to over 40 sites by 2004. There are now 56 PAT affiliate programs with different “homes” in Family Centers, schools, and health and human service organizations throughout Pennsylvania.

## About Parents as First Teachers in the United Kingdom

Parents as Teachers was brought to the U.K. in 1991 by Pam Holtom, a school principal who wanted to give more children the best chance of school and life success. Pam believed parents wanted the best for their children but often welcomed additional support to achieve their hopes. Having started in the school system, the program spread to three of the four nations of the U.K., via Family Support and Early Help.



PENNSYLVANIA  
Parents as Teachers®

Welcome to our monthly article to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Pennsylvania PAT. This month we will focus on PAT as a home-based early intervention.

Here is a research article that you may find helpful in demonstrating the value of PAT as a home-based early intervention.

### Effects of Home-based Early Intervention on Child Outcomes: A Randomized Controlled Trial of Parents as Teachers in Switzerland

Findings indicated that PAT improved children’s adaptive behavior, developmental status, and language skills at the age of 3 years. Problem behavior was reduced in families with the highest risk. The results are discussed in the light of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model.

[Read article >>](#)

Source: Early Childhood Research Quarterly, May 2019

## In-Person “Be Strong Parent Café” Training Institute – Space Still Available!

If you are interested in providing place-based Be Strong Parent Cafes in your community, there is still space available for a few teams to attend the Institute in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, Oct. 26-27, 2022.

Please contact [Rijelle Kraft](#) for more information.

## Parents as Teachers Online Courses

### Foundational and Model Implementation

*For new parent educators and new supervisors of affiliate programs*

Monday, Sept. 12 – Friday, Sept. 23

Monday, Oct. 17 – Friday, Oct. 28

Monday, Nov. 7 – Friday, Nov. 18

### Foundational 2: 3 Years Through Kindergarten

Monday, Nov. 28 – Friday, Dec. 2

Register for courses at the National Parents as Teachers’ [training website](#). Questions regarding registration for PAT trainings? Contact [Jennifer Esposito](#).



## 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](#)

at Center for Schools and Communities

### [Children's Trust Fund](#)

### [Strengthening Families](#)

## Family Support at Center for Schools and Communities

275 Grandview Avenue  
Suite 200, Camp Hill, PA 17011  
(717) 763-1661

[centerforschoolsandcommunities.org](http://centerforschoolsandcommunities.org)

# Safe Kids Corner



## Getting Ready to Drive for Preteens

**T**alk to your child about how to be safe on the road. We know your kids are excited to learn to drive, and this can be a good thing for you, too. Use their interest in this topic to have conversations about safety and what the rules will be in your household when they begin to drive. Your driver will need to be a safe passenger, not just in your car, but in every car. This is an area where safety must come first, and it's never too early to start.

### Top Tips for Getting Ready to Drive

1. Buckle up, every ride, every time.
2. Talk to your kids about passenger safety. We'll make it easy for you. Check out our Countdown2drive program, which helps you start a conversation to set guidelines for your family.
3. Kids are always watching, even when you think they're not. So be a good example. Eliminate distractions by not using a cell phone or texting while driving. Use your teen or preteen to read maps and help with finding locations.
4. Teach your kids to ride with experienced drivers and never get in the car with someone who has been drinking or doing drugs. Parents must decide what "experienced" means.
5. Make it a rule that kids younger than 13 ride like a VIP – in the back. This is the safest place for preteens and younger children to sit.
6. When carpooling, make sure you have enough seating positions and booster seats for every child in your car and that kids enter and exit curbside. Teach this to your driver-to-be, too.

### Belt Fit Test

1. The child's knees should bend at the edge of the seat when his or her back and bottom are against the vehicle seat back.
2. The vehicle lap belt should fit across the upper thighs.
3. The shoulder belt should fit across the shoulder and chest. Children are usually between 8 and 12 years old when the seat belt fits them properly.

Source: [Safe Kids Worldwide](#)