

Parents as Teachers promotes the optimal early development, learning, and health of children by supporting and engaging their parents and caregivers.

Introduction

Pennsylvania PAT programs continued to be responsive to families' needs during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in FY 2021-2022. While many in-person visits and group connections were held in place-based settings, there remained an ongoing need for virtual service delivery options which maintained fidelity to the program model. For example, LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc.'s 2022 report, *Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Virtual Service Delivery on Parents as Teachers Families and Parent Educators*, stated "80% of PAT families would like to have virtual visits be available as an option for services in the future." Furthermore, using the Coronavirus Impact Scale, PAT intervention families experienced positive outcomes with significantly lower average ratings in the areas of personal stress, family stress, access to medical care, and total COVID-19 impact score than the control families.

Evidence-Based Model

Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers (PAT) evidence-based home visiting model promotes the optimal early development, learning, and health of children by supporting and engaging their parents and caregivers. PAT serves expectant families and those with newborns through the child's first year in school.

PAT's model approach and research-informed curriculum focuses on parent-child interaction, development-centered parenting, and family well-being. The program is culturally adaptable. Through personal visits, certified parent educators create settings where families can build protective factors, conduct health and developmental child screenings, host group meetings, and connect parents to resources.

Research

Independent evaluation has been integral to the success of Parents as Teachers. Studies published in peer-reviewed journals show statistically significant effects of PAT. PAT meets the Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness (HomVEE) criteria, as demonstrated in a review conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, with favorable, replicable, and sustainable outcomes in:

- Child development and early detection of delays and health issues.
- School readiness that increases school success.
- Promotion of language development and literacy skills and increased school engagement by parents.
- Parenting practices that increase parental knowledge and build confidence.
- Reductions in child maltreatment.

Family Leadership

PAT recognizes that parents and family members know their children best and promotes their leadership development.

"The W family joined the PAT program in 2018 after attending one of our Mother-to-Mother breastfeeding group connections. New to the area, they were excited to take part in Group Connections, were very engaged with resource connections, the curriculum, literacy activities and goal setting. As examples of their strong engagement, their son is about to complete the local library's 1,000 books before kindergarten program. In addition, they are the first family in our program to fill up two binders of PAT handouts! They have made many referrals to the PAT program as they know how many positive outcomes the program can provide. With their son entering kindergarten this Fall and completing the program fully, we are pleased to announce that Mom has joined the Beginnings staff as our newest Parent Educator!"

— Beginnings, Inc.

Being engaged with the PAT program was positive for families.

Despite challenges related to areas such as staff recruitment and retention and securing resources for families, Pennsylvania PAT programs managed to establish and maintain significant relationships and connections with families. Three organizations became Parents as Teachers affiliates in the 2021-2022 year. They are reaching families in underserved areas of the state.





A Parent's Perspective

Parents as Teachers builds parent awareness and understanding of child development and parenting responses.

“The PAT Program has helped me as a parent to understand more about my child. It helped me understand their development and the barriers we can overcome together. [...] I did not know that when a child plays, they can learn. I realized parent engagement is important in a child's play. The interaction between me and my child or as a whole family is important to me and my child. As we interact and play together, we are bonding, connecting, and learning together.”

— Oxford Circle

Connection to Care

One of the four core components of the PAT model is developing a resource network and connecting families with supports.

“We have a strong partnership with the Intermediate Unit. One of our families has a severely delayed child and was not receiving early intervention services for their daughter. She was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. The IU team provides services at the family center. They have gotten her a special walker and feeding assistance and has seen an improvement due to her consistent care and therapy.”

— Monessen Family Center PAT/
S.W. PA Human Services, Inc.

PAT in Pennsylvania

Parents as Teachers programs, operating in Pennsylvania since 1992, are funded through a variety of sources, such as the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), utilizing federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) and state investments and through local county children and youth agencies, school districts, foundations, and gifts. Pennsylvania PAT celebrated its 30th year anniversary in 2022.

OCDEL-funded Pennsylvania Family Centers use evidence-based PAT as the core service in achieving positive outcomes for healthy child development and parent education. Other PAT providers in Pennsylvania include community action agencies, schools, Early Head Start programs, and private nonprofits.

The Pennsylvania PAT State Office, based at Center for Schools and Communities, provides implementation support to programs through site visits, phone and email communications, monthly webinars, newsletters, and professional development. The state office also provides PAT certification courses for new staff.

Pennsylvania PAT is part of Pennsylvania Family Support group, the Family Centers Network, and collaborates with other evidence-based home visiting models as advocates in the Childhood Begins at Home Campaign.

[View research bibliography pdf on parentsasteachers.org.](https://parentsasteachers.org)

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According to the 2021-2022 PAT Affiliate Performance Report:

- 55 PAT affiliates supported families in nearly every county.
- 4,815 families with 6,501 children were served by 282 parent educators.
- 342 families were on waiting lists.
- 65% of families have limited incomes with 17% with low educational attainment.
- 81% of families experience multiple stressors – low income, substance use disorder, child with special needs, English language learners.

In 2021-2022, Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers engaged families in the model's four major components providing:

- **62,664** personal visits.
- **1,207** group connections.
- **10,700** full or partial health and developmental screenings of children.
- **4,221** links to community resources.

Growing the Whole Family

Family well-being is a vital part of the PAT model.

“Parents have engaged with their children's development by using PAT activities, often sharing them with the parent educator by video via text message. A few parents have used community resources for family engagement, including museums. Mothers state that they feel empowered to return to school, learning English, and engaged with community agencies toward meeting their goals.”

— The Health Federation