

Family Support NEWS BRIEF

A publication of

 CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



Keep Families Engaged in Services

Retention

What does retention mean? Dictionaries include several meanings. The most common explanation uses the word retaining, meaning holding onto something or remembering something. When family support programs talk about retention they typically mean families who continue to stay involved using their services or complete a program. Why do people stay involved? Why do they leave? There are many reasons, some unique to a family, others related to the way we conduct our programs.

Family Support work includes many ways of working with families including parent support groups, fatherhood programs, home visiting, resource navigation, welcome centers and more. Family Support work is conducted within child care, Head Start, and other education programs as well. Primarily, family support professionals seek to partner with families to acknowledge strengths and address concerns that a family has. This involves

goal setting and support to achieve goals. It may involve information sharing and demonstration of practices to incorporate into family life. The work promotes child and parent well-being.

Customer Focus

What are the basics of keeping families engaged and involved with services? Many factors influence family decisions about services that they will use. While this article from CXL, an organization that provides professional learning about successful business operations, focuses on a retailer's perspective on retaining customers, these four ideas can prompt our retention strategy thinking:

1. Research your customers to find out what they need most.
2. Develop the product, site, and offers based on existing customer feedback.

3. Evaluate whether a loyalty or rewards program will drive repeat business.
4. Make your retention strategy personal.¹

Incorporating the customer/consumer/client/family voice is critical in the business world and in the health/human service/education/government world. Working with families to support their achievement of being the best parents and rearing successful children in a safe environment occurs as families and staff work together to achieve the goals of the family. “Prioritizing family voice in decision making and planning processes enhances the fit between family needs and services and increases the likelihood that families will access services that will result in case plan completion.”²

Considering the four-step process from CXL, a family support perspective might include questions such as these:

- 1. Research:** What family support services are active in this community?
 - a. Have we asked families: What services address something important to you?
 - b. Do we work with other programs in the area?
- 2. Product Development:** What services does our organization provide?
 - a. Are they services families need or want?
 - b. Are they responsive to feedback?
- 3. Incentives:** What do participants receive (tangible and intangible)?
 - a. Are the “rewards” offered focused on reducing barriers and building protective factors for families?
 - b. How are intangible “rewards” explored and acknowledged?
- 4. Personalization:** How are the services personalized?
 - a. Are family members treated with respect and is their culture honored?
 - b. Are they flexible and convenient for participants?
 - c. Does our work focus on building relationships with families we serve?

Staff Well-being

Working with families can be joyful and stressful. Research suggests that taking care of staff can increase the retention of families in programs. The idea of developing a positive mantra for oneself as a staff person can help you focus on the positives in yourself and others was expressed in a workshop, found at the Head Start Early Childhood and Knowledge Learning Center (ECLKC), “Addressing the Retention of Staff and Families”.³ This is one type of self-care that can help one approach their work with a positive attitude. Within the workshop, the instructor noted “The well-being of staff and families will affect quality and services, which can lead to retention of staff and families in your program.”⁴

Retaining families in services offered goes beyond securing the next appointment with them. Families continue in services for multiple reasons:

- The ability to develop strong relationships with staff and other families.
- Access to useful information and resources.
- Responsive staff who engage in self-care and are treated well by the organization.

The most critical key to family retention is gaining family input on their needs and using that information to inform the quality and availability of services.

Sources

- 1 CXL <https://cxl.com/blog/customer-retention-strategy/>
- 2, 4 Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2021). Family engagement: Partnering with families to improve child welfare outcomes. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/f-fam-engagement/>
- 3 ECLKC <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/addressing-supporting-staff-family-retention>

Please note our new email address FamilySupport@csc.csiu.org

The Family Support Team has used multiple email addresses to reach you. By January 2024 you will no longer receive emails from CTF@csc.csiu.org, PAT@csc.csiu.org, or Pa-strengtheningfami@csc.csiu.org.

The Impact of Doula Services

The maternal mortality rate has been on the rise in the United States since 2019 and is continuing to increase. The maternal mortality rate in 2021 was 32.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, which is more deaths than in 2020 and 2019 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.¹ The mortality rate is significantly higher for Black women at a rate of 69.9 deaths per 100,000 live births.¹ The reaction to this health crisis has caused widespread concern, which is catching the attention of community programs and advocates. Many programs that provide support for prenatal and post-natal women are beginning to turn to doula services to help improve health outcomes.

According to a brief issued by the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, “doulas are non-clinically trained professionals who can provide physical, emotional, and informational support during pregnancy, delivery, and after childbirth.”² Having doula services available to women helps bridge the gaps in maternal health care and create a stronger support system.

Doulas can provide education, emotional support, advocacy, and support in understanding the health care system.³ Several research studies have found that having a doula can have positive health outcomes for women. Some of these positive outcomes include less cesarean and premature deliveries, improved breast feeding, and help reduce stress during labor.⁴

Community based programs, such as home visiting programs, have started utilizing doula services to support the families they serve. Some research indicates that there have been some successful outcomes in having both services available to families. The Maternal and Child Health Journal shared a study on doula home visiting services. The study results indicated “improved maternal and child health when mothers have access to doula services through community-based home-visiting programs”.⁵

Citations

- 1 <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2021/maternal-mortality-rates-2021.pdf>
- 2 <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/dfcd768f1caf6fabf3d281f762e8d068/ASPE-Doula-Issue-Brief-12-13-22.pdf>
- 3 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10292163/#:~:text=and%20premature%20deliveries-,Doula%20support%2C%20specifically%20in%20low%2Dincome%20women%2C%20was%20shown,reduce%20the%20length%20of%20labor.>
- 4 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10995-018-2626-7>
- 5 Hans, S.L., Edwards, R.C. & Zhang, Y. Correction to: Randomized Controlled Trial of Doula-Home-Visiting Services: Impact on Maternal and Infant Health. *Matern Child Health J* 22 (Suppl 1), 125 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-018-2626-7>

From Donna Hunt-O'Brien, Vice President, Professional and Program Development, Parents as Teachers

Doula Training International (DTI) recently listed their upcoming trainings. Many conference attendees were inspired by PAT's Show Me Strong Families doulas presentation in the plenary and there was a lot of wonderful buzz around adding doula services to programs. If you get requests from the field, DTI would be a good resource to share. PATNC has a relationship with DTI and recognizes their courses as high quality and culturally responsive.

You may learn more about the organization and its work at their website: <https://wearedti.com/>
The organization has trained over 2,500 doulas worldwide. Scroll to Education for the list of doula courses.

Upcoming Family Support Webinar

Save the Date of December 6 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM for the Family Support webinar, “Understanding the Impact of Vicarious Trauma.”



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.

[Alexia Brown](#)

Family Support Technical Assistance Coordinator
(717) 763-1661, ext. 146

[Jennifer Esposito](#)

Family Support Data Coordinator
(717) 763-1661, ext. 161

[Christine Felicetti](#)

Family Support Coordinator
717-763-1661, ext. 104

[Drewanne Kline](#)

Family Support Project Specialist
717-763-1661, ext. 169

[Rijelle Kraft](#)

Family Support Managing Coordinator
(717) 763-1661, ext. 221

[Karen Shanoski](#)

Family Support and Community Engagement Director
(717) 763-1661, ext. 139

[Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers](#) at Center for Schools and Communities

[Pennsylvania Children's Trust Fund](#)

[Pennsylvania Strengthening Families](#)

Family Support at Center for Schools and Communities

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

centerforschoolsandcommunities.org

Parents as Teachers Online Courses

Foundational and Model Implementation

For new parent educators and new supervisors of affiliate programs. Login is required.

[Register for December 4-15](#) Foundational and Model Implementation Course

[Register for December 4-12](#) Foundational Course

Foundational 2: 3 Years through Kindergarten

[Register for November 13-17](#) Foundational 2 Course

Questions regarding registration for **Pennsylvania PAT** courses?

Contact [Jennifer Esposito](#).

Register for other courses offered by **National Parents as Teachers** at their [website](#).

Safe Kids Corner: Fire Safety

Home fires can start and spread quickly, so just a little bit of planning can make a big difference. Make sure to create a home fire escape plan and practice it regularly with your family.

Hard Facts About Fire Safety

- In 2017, 268 children died in home fires.
- Nearly 87% of all fire-related deaths are due to home fires, which spread rapidly and can leave families as little as two minutes to escape once an alarm sounds.
- Fires are not just a problem in the United States. In 2017, more than 27,000 children around the world died due to a fire or burn.
- Working smoke alarms reduce the chances of dying in a reported home fire by 50%.

Top Tips for Fire Safety

- 1. Check smoke alarms.** Make sure there is a working smoke alarm on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and near sleeping areas. Test smoke alarms every month and replace them every 10 years or when the battery is low.
- 2. Create and practice a fire escape plan.** Create a [home fire escape plan](#) with two ways out of every room. Choose a place to meet outside that is a safe distance away from your home.
- 3. Practice a home fire drill at least twice a year.** Practice a home fire drill with your family during the day and at night. Practice escaping in under two minutes. Sometimes that is all the time you will have to get out of the house safely.
- 4. If there is a fire, leave home immediately.** If there is a lot of smoke, get low and crawl out of the house as quickly as possible. Call 911 after you are a safe distance away from your home.

[Learn more fire safety tips.](#) You can also learn more about [preventing burns and scalds, carbon monoxide poisoning](#) and [how to be safe around fireworks](#).

<https://www.safekids.org/fire>