

Family Support NEWS BRIEF

A publication of

 CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



The Effects of Vicarious Trauma and How to Cope

For those who work in the family support field, it is not uncommon to hear children and families share painful experiences of hardship, abuse, violence, and other adverse events. Many social workers, therapists, child welfare and family support professionals hear these experiences from the clients they help, throughout the course of their work. Hearing these traumatic stories from the families they work with can cause professionals to experience vicarious trauma.

Vicarious trauma occurs when professionals suffer from stress due to hearing traumatic experiences in relation to their work.¹

According to The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, up to 50 percent of child welfare workers working with traumatized populations are at a higher risk for vicarious trauma and PTSD.²

Warning Signs

Professionals may begin to show signs associated with their exposure to trauma within their work. These indicators can be behavioral, social, physical, or job performance related. The following are common warning signs that someone is suffering from work-related trauma³:

- Avoiding work or work interactions.
- Having difficulty with emotional regulation.
- Worrying and fear.
- Being distracted.
- Having trouble sleeping.
- Feeling hopeless.

How to Cope

Staff can take several steps to incorporate self-care to prevent the negative effects of the trauma they experience in their work with families and children. Family support staff can foster their own self-care by taking time to journal, draw, garden, meditate, and engage in activities that interest them.⁴

How Organizations Can Support Their Staff

Family support programs and other family serving organizations can put several interventions in place to mitigate employees' experience with trauma in their work. Some strategies that organizations can incorporate include developing policies that support employee self-care, providing secondary trauma training to staff, creating support groups for staff, and providing counseling resources.⁵

Program supervisors should also create a safe space for staff to discuss any concerns about secondary trauma, which can be done during their supervision time.

Resources for Staff and Organizations

[Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center](#)

[The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)

[American Psychological Association](#)

Citations

1. Cuellar, R., Hendricks, A., Clarke, M., Sprang, G., & the NCTSN Secondary Traumatic Stress Collaborative Group. (2021). *Secondary Traumatic Stress: Understanding the Impact on Professionals in Trauma-Exposed Workplaces*. Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress. <https://learn.nctsn.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=12741>
2. Peterson, Sarah. "Secondary Traumatic Stress." The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 22 Oct. 2018, www.nctsn.org/trauma-informed-care/secondary-traumatic-stress. <https://www.nctsn.org/trauma-informed-care/secondary-traumatic-stress/introduction>
3. "What Is Vicarious Trauma? The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit: OVC." Office for Victims of Crime, ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/what-is-vicarious-trauma. Accessed 5 Oct. 2023. <https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/what-is-vicarious-trauma>
4. "Secondary Traumatic Stress." Administration for Children & Families, www.acf.hhs.gov/trauma-toolkit/secondary-traumatic-stress. Accessed 30 Oct. 2023.
5. Hendricks, A. (2012). *Secondary Traumatic Stress in Child Welfare: Multi-Level Prevention and Intervention Strategies*. CW360°: Secondary Trauma and the Child Welfare Workforce, Spring 2012. https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/media/document/os_sts_child_welfare_article_review.pdf

Celebrating Parents as Teachers Day: A Day of Reflection and Fun

On November 8, 2023, Parents as Teachers (PAT) program staff enthusiastically gathered to commemorate Parents as Teachers Day, a special occasion dedicated to honoring Mildred Winter, the visionary founder of Parents as Teachers.

The Pennsylvania PAT State Office marked the day by sharing the Governor's Proclamation, officially recognizing, and observing PAT Day in the state. This acknowledgment emphasized the importance of PAT's mission in supporting families and early childhood development.



The gathering went beyond formalities, providing a platform for programs to highlight their impact on families within the community. Attendees engaged in sharing PAT Day activities, exchanging stories of family and program impact, and fostering connections with decision-makers and stakeholders. The event seamlessly blended reflection and enjoyment, underlining the multifaceted nature of PAT's influence.

A highlight of the day was a moving video presentation that vividly illustrated PAT's profound impact on the lives of families. This visual narrative served as a powerful testament to the transformative work carried out by Parents as Teachers programs across the region.

It was a day of recognition, connection, and most importantly, a day of celebrating the dedicated parents who are the first and most influential teachers in their children's lives.

Please join us in welcoming Drewanne Kline, the Family Support Specialist. Her work will focus on event production and communication. She brings experience in training and design, photography and as a classroom teacher. She is a graduate of Susquehanna University. We are glad she has joined our team.

Save the Date!



2024 Pennsylvania
**Strengthening
Families** Conference

**Partnering to Build Resilient
Families and Communities**

May 7 - 9 | State College, Pennsylvania



Share Your Story

Please email your success stories or program news to share in future News Briefs to [Drewanne Kline](#).

Follow us on social media

Stay up to date on the [Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers Facebook page](#) or on the [Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Facebook page](#).

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

We would like to inform you about an upcoming change in our Family Support Team's email address at Center for Schools and Communities. Effective January 2024, all communications from and to our Family Support Team will exclusively use the email address familysupport@csc.csiu.org.

We kindly request that you take a moment to update your contact lists and inform your IT department or relevant parties within your organization to ensure that emails from familysupport@csc.csiu.org are permitted and not filtered as spam.

If you have any questions or require further assistance regarding this change, please do not hesitate to reach our Family Support Team at the new email address familysupport@csc.csiu.org.

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in this matter. Thank you for your continued trust in Center for Schools and Communities.

Parents as Teachers Online Courses

Foundational 2: 3 Years through Kindergarten

Please note the January 8 - 12 session has been canceled.

[Register for February 20-23 Foundational 2 Course.](#)

Foundational and Model Implementation

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

[FMI Register for January 16 - 26 Foundational and Model Implementation Course](#)

Please note starts on a Tuesday due to MLK day.

[FND Register for January 16 - 23 Foundational Course](#)

Please note starts on a Tuesday due to MLK day.

Questions regarding registration for Pennsylvania PAT courses? [Contact Jennifer Esposito.](#)

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



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

[Pennsylvania Children's Trust Fund](#)

[Pennsylvania Strengthening Families](#)

Family Support at Center for Schools and Communities

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centerforschoolsandcommunities.org

Register for Family Support webinar, Parent Leadership Month January 3, 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM.



Safe Kids Corner: Toy Safety Tips

Find the Perfect Toy for the Right Age

1. Consider your child's age and development when purchasing a toy or game. Read the instructions and warning labels to make sure it's appropriate for your child.
2. Check to make sure there aren't any small parts or other potential choking hazards before you settle on the perfect toy.

Don't Forget a Helmet for Riding Toys

1. Include a [CPSC](#)-certified helmet to keep them safe while they are having fun on a new bike, skateboard, scooter, or any other riding equipment.
2. Learn more [bike safety tips and watch our helmet safety video](#).

Store Toys After Play

1. Use a bin or container to store toys after playtime is over. Make sure there are no holes or hinges that could catch little fingers.

Sign Up to Receive Product Recalls

1. Stay up to date on toy recalls. Safe Kids compiles product recalls specific to children and sends twice-monthly e-mail alerts for recent recalls. [Sign up for the latest recall information.](#)
2. Visit www.recalls.gov for additional information about product recalls related to kids.

You can [download these toy safety tips](#).

Read article on [Safe Kids Worldwide's website](#).