

Family Support NEWS BRIEF

A publication of

 CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



Partnering with Families with Children with Autism

Family support professionals partner with families to create nurturing environments for their children. Families with children with autism may need additional or tailored support as they navigate their parenting journey. The resources below can be used to guide families on this journey.

Information about Autism Spectrum Disorder

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, “autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurological and developmental disorder that affects how people interact with others, communicate, learn, and behave.”¹

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website has an [Autism Spectrum Disorder](#) section with information about ASD, how it is diagnosed, and data and statistics.
- The [Autism Science Foundation](#) provides information about autism as well as access to scientific research on ASD.
- The [Organization for Autism Research](#) has links for information about autism, research, and resources for families, self-advocates, and educators.
- It is important to consider how we talk about autism. There are varying perspectives within the autism community about the use of people-first and identity-first language. The National Institutes of Health has an [article](#) that explores this topic. Autistic Self Advocacy Network intern Lydia Brown provides another perspective in her article “[Identity First Language](#).” Explore the [Inclusive Language: Considerations for Use](#) created by the Philadelphia Autism Project: Guided by the Autism Community.

Diagnosis and Access to Services

Signs and symptoms of autism may arise early in a child's life. Autism is considered a "spectrum disorder" because types and severity of symptoms can vary greatly.² Parents may raise concerns about their child's development through conversations with family support staff or during routine developmental screenings. Staff can discuss concerns with families and connect them to resources for diagnosis and services.

- Use resources from the "[Learn the Signs. Act Early.](#)" campaign from the CDC to encourage parents to be curious about and monitor their child's development.
- When a developmental concern arises, family support staff often provide warm referrals to Early Intervention providers in their communities. [Early Intervention](#) providers can conduct more in-depth screening and develop an individualized plan for the child. Parents who have questions about their child's development may call the CONNECT Helpline: 1-800-692-7288. The CONNECT Helpline assists families in locating resources and providing information regarding child development for children ages birth to age five.
- The Early Intervention Technical Assistance (EITA) Portal provides [resources for families](#) that are receiving Early Intervention services, including fact sheets, important forms, and videos.
- Learn more about the signs, symptoms, and diagnostic process for autism from the [Eunice Kennedy Schriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development](#).
- Seeking a diagnosis and finding services can be overwhelming. Families may need support with the next steps. [Autism Speaks](#) has resources and toolkits including for when [concerns are first identified](#), through [next steps after diagnosis](#), and [beyond](#).



Resources for Staff

Learn more about autism and how staff can support families with children with autism using the following resources:

- The [Early Intervention Technical Assistance Portal](#) provides links to professional learning courses that focus on autism for both professionals and family members.
- [Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative \(ASERT\)](#) is a Pennsylvania initiative funded by the Office of Developmental Programs to improve access to information and resources for those living with autism, their families, and service providers.³ There is a plethora of [resources for professionals](#) on their website.
- The [Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center](#) offers a guide for educators on supporting children with autism.

Resources for Families

Children do not come with an instruction manual, and parents and caregivers need access to reliable information about their children's development. Further, connecting with other families can help to relieve feelings of isolation.

- The ASERT website provides access to resources for [parents and caregivers](#), [family members](#), and [individuals with autism](#). There is also a [calendar of events](#) around the state and a [directory of support groups](#).
- The American Academy of Pediatrics provides articles of interest to families on their parent-facing [HealthyChildren.org website](#).
- The [Child Mind Institute](#) has a variety of articles and resources for parents and caregivers including how to share an autism diagnosis, strategies to manage behaviors, and easing transitions.
- The CDC hosts [Autism Spectrum Disorder Quest](#) which is a collection of resources and videos for kids in fourth through sixth grades to learn more about autism.
- [Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania](#) connects "families of children and adults with special needs or disabilities who have had similar journeys."⁴
- The Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership (PEAL) Center has many [resources for families](#) including information and programs that connect parents and support advocacy efforts.

¹ National Institute of Mental Health (n.d.) Autism Spectrum Disorder. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. Retrieved March 6, 2024.

² Ibid.

³ ASERT (n.d.). About us. Retrieved from: <https://paautism.org/about-us/> on March 8, 2024.

⁴ Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania (n.d.). Home. Retrieved from: <https://www.parenttoparent.org/> on March 8, 2024.

Excitement Builds for 2024 Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Conference with Dynamic Keynote Presenters

The [2024 Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Conference](#), May 7-9, in State College, is just around the corner and promises to be an exciting event that you won't want to miss. This year's conference features a lineup of exceptional speakers who will deliver enlightening and empowering presentations.



One of the keynote speakers is [Dr. Charlyn Harper Browne](#), a renowned expert in child and adolescent development. With her extensive background in psychology and counseling, Dr. Browne will be sharing her insights on fostering resilience in children, youth, and families in her presentation "Expanding the Understanding of Resilience."



Joining Dr. Browne is [Gerria Coffee](#), a multifaceted entrepreneur and advocate for equitable birth and breastfeeding support. As the founder of Genesis Birth Services, Gerria has dedicated her career to addressing the lack of representation

for people of color in the birth service profession. Her keynote, "Take the Lead in Building Resilient Families through Doula Support," will highlight the transformative impact of culturally competent care during pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding.



Additionally, [Sarita Sashington](#) will bring her expertise in parent engagement and community building to the forefront. With a passion for nurturing familial bonds and promoting cultural humility, Sarita's presentation, "Have the 'Baddest' Bounce Back Ever!" is poised to inspire attendees to overcome obstacles and thrive in the face of adversity.

The 2024 Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Conference is an excellent opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations, learn from experts, and drive positive change in communities across the state. Make sure to register and be a part of this transformative experience!

[Register for 2024 PA SF Conference](#)



2024 Pennsylvania
**Strengthening
Families** Conference

**Partnering to Build Resilient
Families and Communities**

May 7 - 9 | State College, Pennsylvania

Family Support Webinar

No May webinar. We hope to see you at our conference!

Share Your Story

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

Follow us on social media

To stay up to date, 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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Safe Kids Corner: 3 Tips to Keep Kids Safe Around Cleaning Products

With spring cleaning already underway, the [American Cleaning Institute](#) and Safe Kids Worldwide have teamed up to remind parents and caregivers to be especially attentive about keeping cleaning products out of the reach and sight of children.

Here are three tips to help parents keep kids safe around liquid laundry packets and other cleaning products:

- **Store household products out of children's reach and sight.** Young kids are often eye-level with items on counters and under kitchen and bathroom sinks, so keep cleaning supplies, laundry packets, hand sanitizers, and personal care products where children can't reach them.
- **Keep cleaning products in their original containers and read product labels.** Use and store products according to the product label.
- **Do not leave cleaning products unattended.** Kids can get into things quickly, so remember not to leave cleaning products or personal care products unattended while you are using them.
- **Save the Poison Help number in your phone and post it visibly at home: 1-800-222-1222.** Specialists at poison control centers provide free, confidential, expert medical advice 24 hours a day. They can answer questions and help with poison emergencies.

Once you are done using cleaning products, make sure you carefully dispose of empty cleaning containers. To protect children, pets, and garbage handlers, replace caps first, then discard in a sealed recycling bin or garbage container.

Happy Cleaning!

Resources

[Safe Kids and ACI Infographic](#)

[Liquid Laundry Packets: Simple, Sustainable, Safe](#)

[American Cleaning Institute Blog Post](#)

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