

# Family Support NEWS BRIEF

A publication of



CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



## Fall for Families

September 22 marked the first official day of fall. Many people look forward to this time of year. It can be an exciting time filled with hayrides, apple cider, and pumpkin spice. Unfortunately, it can also bring struggles for some families with days getting shorter, the temperature getting colder, and schedules becoming busier.

The drop in temperatures can have a financial impact. This can result in the need for warmer clothing. Families may find themselves budgeting for winter jackets, boots, and other essentials. Food costs may also begin to increase as the items they may have gotten from their or a friend's garden disappear, and the price of those seasonal fruits and vegetables begins to increase at the grocery store. This can be a major strain for households already dealing with inflation and economic challenges.

The shift into fall also means the return of busy schedules. With the start of the school year, families juggle homework, parent-teacher meetings, and

extracurricular activities. Sports, music lessons, and other commitments often ramp up. Energy costs can begin to rise to heat homes, or they may need to switch to another energy source for heat, such as filling an oil tank before turning on the heat.

Families may need to focus on work around the house to prepare for colder temperatures, such as sealing up windows, getting out blankets that were packed away, or possibly even chopping firewood. Let's not forget holiday-oriented events which increase as we move through fall into winter. All these things can make family routines more hectic and leave little time for relaxation.

Adding to the stress is the reduction in daylight hours. Shorter days can affect mood and energy levels, particularly for those sensitive to seasonal changes. Less sunlight may lead to feelings of fatigue and contribute to conditions like seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which can further impact productivity and family dynamics. This



disorder can affect both children and parents. Visit the [National Institute of Mental Health website](#) for basics about SAD.

As those working with families, it's important to keep in mind the additional stress this time of year brings. It may be appropriate to refamiliarize yourself with the resources available for families. What food banks, clothing closets, and soup kitchens are available as the weather gets colder? Have there been any changes in operating hours or locations? What energy assistance programs might be available and are they different this year from last year?

You may also be able to reduce a family's stress by helping them stay organized with a fall schedule, creating a fall budget to anticipate the change in household expenses, or making a plan to prioritize self-care and time for family relaxation. If you see signs of family members experiencing SAD or symptoms of depression, you might suggest that they seek the help of a medical professional.

Working with families is never easy, but preparing now to help families with seasonal issues may help reduce your own work-related stress this fall.

## Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers Courses

### November 4-15, 2024

*Skipping 11/11 for Veteran's Day*

Start Time: 8:00 AM CST

Instructors: Terry Wertman, Bethany Smith

[Register for FMI November](#)

[Register for FND November](#)

### December 2-13, 2024

Start Time: 8:00 AM CST

Instructors: Terry Wertman, Bethany Smith

[Register for FMI December](#)

[Register for FND December](#)





## 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  
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[Pennsylvania Strengthening Families](#)

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# Safe Kids Corner

## Halloween Safety Tips

### Walk Safely

- Cross the street at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks. Look left, right and left again when crossing and keep looking as you cross.
- Put electronic devices down, keep heads up, and walk, don't run, across the street.
- Teach children to make eye contact with drivers before crossing in front of them.
- Always walk on sidewalks or paths. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic as far to the left as possible. Children should walk on direct routes with the fewest street crossings.
- Watch for cars that are turning or backing up. Teach children to never dart out into the street or cross between parked cars.
- Join kids under age 12 for trick-or-treating. If kids are mature enough to be out without supervision, tell them to stick to familiar areas that are well lit and trick-or-treat in groups.

### Costumes for a Safe Halloween

- Decorate costumes and bags with reflective tape or stickers and, if possible, choose light colors.
- Choose face paint and makeup whenever possible instead of masks, which can obstruct a child's vision.
- Have kids carry glow sticks or flashlights to help them see and be seen by drivers.
- When selecting a costume, make sure it is the right size to prevent trips and falls.

### Drive Extra Safely on Halloween

- Slow down and be especially alert in residential neighborhoods. Children are excited on Halloween and may move in unpredictable ways.
- Take extra time to look for kids at intersections, on medians, and on curbs.
- Enter and exit driveways and alleys slowly and carefully.
- Get rid of any distractions — like your phone — in your car so you can concentrate on the road and your surroundings.
- Turn your headlights on earlier in the day to spot children from greater distances.
- Popular trick-or-treating hours are 5:30 PM to 9:30 PM. Be especially alert for kids during those hours.

[Source: Safe Kids Worldwide](#)