

Family Support NEWS BRIEF

A publication of



CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



Supporting Families Through Economic Uncertainty

With the increasing cost of food, housing, and other essentials across the nation, Pennsylvania families are continuing to navigate financial difficulties. Family support professionals are skilled in providing support and connecting families to resources that fit their unique needs. When families build trusting relationships with their home visitor, it can provide a safe space for them to share their financial hardships. Although these conversations are difficult to have, professionals who serve families can make several efforts to make the discussion meaningful.

Professionals can start by asking concrete questions about what the family is struggling with. For example, ask parents and caregivers about their needs such as bills, housing, food, and baby supplies. Another best practice when having this conversation with families is to normalize financial stressors. For example, saying something like, “Many families are feeling stressed

with their finances, you are not alone.” Family support staff should refer to their resource network directory to connect families to local resources. These resource connections can include rental and housing assistance programs, food pantries, cash assistance, utility assistance, and baby supplies. Additionally, staff can help families apply for assistance programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Women Infants Children (WIC), and other programs.

Pennsylvania has several resources to help families connect to assistance programs.

- [COMPASS](#) – An online tool for Pennsylvanians to apply for health and human service programs
- [United Way of Pennsylvania – PA 211](#)

- [PA Navigate](#) – An online tool to help Pennsylvanians connect to community-based organizations that provide referrals to state and local [resources](#).

By having open conversations about financial hardship and providing resource connections, family support professionals can help families move from surviving to thriving—even in uncertain times.

Sources

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2. Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. COMPASS: Access to Health and Human Services. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, <https://www.compass.dhs.pa.gov/home/#/>. Accessed 2 Oct. 2025.
3. United Way of Pennsylvania. PA 211: Get Connected. Get Help. <https://www.pa211.org/>. Accessed 2 Oct. 2025.
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Parents as Teachers Place

[Parents as Teachers Day](#)

Each year on November 8, communities and programs celebrate Parents as Teachers Day to honor the role parents play as their children's first and most important teachers. Inspired by the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, which began in Missouri in the 1980s under the leadership of Mildred Winter, the day highlights the importance of early learning, home visiting, and family engagement. PAT affiliates mark the occasion with family events, workshops, and community partnerships that showcase the power of parent-child connections and reaffirm their mission to support families and their children.

Children's Trust Fund (CTF) Corner

There is a growing acknowledgement about the importance of including family voice in program planning, implementation, and advocacy. [Casey Family Programs brief](#) help you learn more about how to meaningfully engage caregivers with lived experience and expertise in your programs.

Parents as Teachers Core Course

Foundational Training 2 Course

November 17 – 21 | 9:00 AM

Instructors: Terry Wertman, Bethany Smith

[Register for F2 Course](#)

Family Supports Webinar

Introduction to HOPE

November 5 | 10:00 AM



Safe Kids Corner: Holiday Safety Tips

On the Road

Distracted Drivers and Pedestrians

1. Keep an eye out for distracted pedestrians and drivers who may not be paying attention to you, especially when backing out of parking spaces. Shopping center parking lots are busier during the holidays.
2. Remind your teen driver to be extra alert during this holiday season, when conditions are more challenging even for experienced drivers.
3. Make sure you are not distracted while driving. Commit to keeping your phone down. No text message or play list is worth the risk.

Child Passenger Safety

1. Buckle up every ride, every time, whether it's the long trip to visit family or around the block to the mall.
2. Make sure every rider in the vehicle has their own seat belt or car seat, even for short rides and when traveling with a large group.
3. Check your car seat before holiday travel. Seventy-three percent of car seats are not used or installed correctly, so check it before you hit the road. Here's a quick [car seat checklist](#) to help you out. It takes only 15 minutes. If you are having even the slightest trouble, questions or concerns, certified child passenger safety technicians are able to help or even double check your work. [Find a Safe Kids car seat checkup event near you.](#)

4. Remember that safety in the car goes beyond your little ones. Kids who have outgrown a forward-facing harness seat are not ready for a seat belt or front seat yet. They are safest in a booster seat that enables the adult seat belt to fit properly. Even when children have graduated from booster seats, they should remain in the back seat until they reach the age of 13.

Travel Preparedness

1. Have an exit strategy for your road trip. The car is packed, the kids are in the right seat, the seats are installed properly, and you're on the open road. Nothing can stop you now, right? Wrong. You will most certainly hear the all too familiar howl that means "I want food" or "change my diaper." When it happens, try not to worry about making good time. Instead, get off at the next exit and find a safe area to feed and/or change your child.
2. Prepare for weather emergencies, if you live in a cold-weather state. Pack extra blankets, food, and diapers, in case your car is stuck in snow or disabled. Keep your cell phone charged, make sure someone knows your route, and clear the exhaust of packed snow.
3. Keep hot foods, large gifts, and anything that can become a projectile in the trunk. You never know when you might have to stop abruptly.
4. Designate a driver or use a car service to make sure you get home safely when you are headed to a party and plan to drink alcohol.

continued on next 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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[Pennsylvania Children's Trust Fund](#)

[Pennsylvania Strengthening Families](#)

Family Support at Center for Schools and Communities

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In the Home

Holiday Decorating

1. Hang breakable ornaments at top of the tree. This leaves room for kids to decorate the bottom with non-breakable items.
2. Keep harmful plants out of reach. Some popular holiday plants are poisonous to children and pets, including mistletoe and holly berries. In a poison emergency, call the national Poison Control Center at (800) 222-1222.
3. Be aware of devices with button batteries. Keep decorations with button batteries, such as greeting cards and small remote controls out of children's reach.

Fire Prevention

1. Water natural trees regularly. When needles are dry, they can catch fire easily.
2. Turn off decorative lights before leaving home or going to sleep. Regularly check lights for exposed or frayed wires and loose connections.
3. Keep candles and matches out of reach. Lit candles should be at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn, and don't forget to blow them out when you leave the room or before you go to sleep. Store matches and lighters out of children's reach and sight.
4. Check smoke alarms. Make sure there is a working smoke alarm on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and near sleeping areas. Review your fire escape plan with family members and guests.

Holiday Gift Giving

1. Read instructions and warning labels when choosing toys for children. Make sure the [toy or game](#) is appropriate for your child's age and development.
2. Separate toys by age. Toys intended for older children may contain small pieces, including [button batteries](#), that can pose a risk to curious, younger siblings.
3. Don't forget a helmet. If you are giving a bike, skateboard, or scooter this holiday season, be sure to include a helmet to keep them safe while they're having fun.
4. Stay up to date on toy recalls. Safe Kids Worldwide complies product recalls specific to children and sends [twice-monthly email alerts for recent recalls](#).

Holiday Cooking

1. Create a kid-free zone. Teach younger children to stay at least three feet away from your cooking space. Place babies in a high chair outside of the kid-free zone where you can see them.
2. Keep hot foods and liquids out of children's reach. Cook on the back burners of the stove and keep hot foods away from the edge of your counters to [prevent burns](#).
3. Teach older children how to cook safely. Teach them never to leave the kitchen while they're cooking and always use oven mitts or potholders to carry hot pots and pans.

Source: SafeKids.org