
Best Practice Fact Sheet – Strengthening Families

PARENTS AS TEACHERS (PAT) – Washington

Service

Description:

Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a nationwide evidence-based program that provides child development knowledge and support to parents and caregivers. PAT has four service delivery components: (1) home visits, (2) group meetings, (3) screenings, and (4) resource referrals. Home visits are done up to twice per month for children from birth to age three and can continue until age five if funding is available. Home visitors stay with the same families until the youngest child in the home ages out of the program. There is a waitlist for PAT in many counties and the average wait time is about 6 weeks or more.

12 Early Head Start (EHS) programs in Washington use PAT as their home visit model. The national PAT office uses the term “braided” relationships to describe this partnership. While EHS has a choice to offer only center-based services, it has found that a home-based or a combination program which combines home-based and center-based services improve their ability to meet federal performance requirements.

Target Population:

Parents or caregivers with children under 6 years old who are interested promoting school readiness and healthy child development

Goals:

- Increase knowledge of early childhood development and improve parenting practices.
- Provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues.
- Prevent child abuse and neglect.
- Increase children’s school readiness and success.

Cost:

Statewide, PAT averages \$2,500 per family per year according to Kathy Zeisel, PAT Coordinator/State Leader, Parent Trust for Washington Children. Funding for PAT varies from program to program. For example, Children’s Home Society received United Way funding to operate its PAT program in Clark County. Services and costs are not billed to Medicaid.

Caseload Data:

Approximately 2,000 families are served in Washington each year. PAT believes that 78% of their families are low-income (defined as receiving one or more public programs such as TANF, WIC, food benefits, etc.).

Evidence:

- Evidence-based home visiting program - www.parentsasteachers.org
- California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse on Child Welfare
- Congressional Research Service
- WA State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) – “Evidence-Based Programs to Prevent Children from Entering and Remaining in the Child Welfare System: Benefits and Costs for Washington” by Stephanie Lee, Steve Aos, and Marna Miller.

Assessment:

Home visitors are required to conduct annual developmental, health, vision, and hearing screenings. PAT uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to screen for developmental delays. Home visitors do not make health diagnoses but will make referrals if a screening identifies an issue. They also teach parents to look for signs of potential developmental or health issues with their children. Parents as Teachers does not have a standard assessment strategy in its

national model but Washington State PAT programs use a common parent self-report of parenting knowledge and self-efficacy.

Operation in Washington:

There are currently 30 PAT programs in Washington State. Parents as Teachers CCF-funded programs are delivered by the St. James Family Center serving rural Southwestern Washington, Spokane PAT provided through Children's Home Society serving Spokane County, and Yakima PAT, a part of Thrive by Five's program catchment area in Yakima County.

Description of Services:

- PAT prefers home visitors to have a bachelor's degree in child development, nursing, education or a related field; however, each PAT program may establish its own standards. There is an expectation that regardless of the home visitor's educational background, he or she must be able to do college level work.
- Certification requires home visitors to attend a five-day institute and a follow-up training within the first year. Training covers sequences of early development, screening techniques to identify health or developmental issues, and parent-child interaction facilitation.
- Standalone PAT programs pay for training from their program funding sources while "braided" programs use EHS funding to train staff and home visitors.
- Home visitors share age-appropriate child development information with parents, help them learn to observe their child's development, address parenting concerns, and engage the family in activities that provide meaningful parent/child interaction and support the child's development.
- Home visitors also help families connect with needed resources, such as TANF, to overcome barriers.
- Group meetings are done monthly to support child development and parenting skills. They include parent support groups, learn and play groups, parent education classes, family fun night, and children's play groups.
- Some former PAT parents may become home visitors. However, there is no structured way to help them make this transition so a parent must self-initiate contact with a PAT program to start the process.

Eligibility:

- Parent or caregiver of a child under 6 years old.
- There is no income limit for PAT but eligibility varies based upon funding source(s) requirements.
- "Braided" programs (Early Head Start with PAT) have to meet EHS enrollment requirements.

Findings:

- More than a dozen outcome studies have been conducted on the effects of the Parents as Teachers Born to Learn model. Studies published in peer-reviewed journals show statistically significant and sustained effects. Outcome data have been collected on more than 16,000 children and parents.
- PAT has been named one of the highest-rated applicants in the Department of Education's Investing in Innovation program (i3), scoring higher than Harvard University in the category of validation.
- Research on FACE, a similar 20-year-old program which uses the Parents as Teachers model to provide services for Native American children up to 5 years old, has already demonstrated that the program contributes to school readiness and third-grade reading achievement. BabyFACE will serve high-needs American Indian families living in the catchments areas of BIE schools not currently offering the FACE program.

Implications for Policymakers and Program Developers to Consider:

- Parents as Teachers utilizes home visits and group meetings as the vehicles that allow parents to empower themselves to work with their own children.
- The education field recognizes that children need support in the learning process, but parents are too often left out of this process. Greater parent involvement is a critical link in the child's development of learning skills, including reading and writing.
- Long-term home visits (more than 2 years) are the key to the Parents as Teachers program. Group meetings and home visits work together to balance the learning experiences for parents and children.

Contacts:

- Kathy Zeisel, M.Ed., PAT Coordinator/State Leader, Parent Trust for Washington Children, 206-233-0156 ext 228, kzeisel@parenttrust.org
- Margaret Grant, Children's Home Society, Certified PAT Home Visitor, 360-695-1325
- Recommended by Seth Chamberlain and Lauren Supplee from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHS) as a best or promising practice to review for home visit services.
- Recommended by California Evidence-based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare as a program with "a Scientific Rating of 3 – Promising Research Evidence."
- Recommended by WA State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) as a program with Benefit-Cost Estimates and an Evidence-Based Option for Reducing Involvement in the Child Welfare System.

Resources:

- "Home Visiting Collaboration and Consolidation, SB5830 Report" - www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/hvna/collaboration/default.htm
- California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse on Child Welfare - www.cebc4cw.org/search/topical-area/18; www.parentsasteachers.org; www.preventchildabusesb.org/CRSHomeVisitReportOct2009.pdf
- Child Trends, "What Works for Home Visiting Programs," 7/27/2010 www.childtrends.org;
- Literature reviews and meta-analyses by Sweet, M.A. and Applebaum, M.I. (*Home Visiting Best Practices: A Review of the Literature, May 2007* - www.birth-beyond.com/ and Deanna Gomby (*Home Visitation in 2005: Outcomes for Children and Parents* – www.ced.org/projects/kids.shtml/#new)
- Kimberly S. Howard and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn in "The Future of Children" latest issue; (Journal Issue: Preventing Child Maltreatment Volume 19 Number 2 Fall 2009) <http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=71&articleid=514>
- Congressional Research Service report Home Visitation for Families with Young Children by Karen E. Lynch & Emilie Stoltzfus, 10/23/2009 www.preventchildabusesb.org/CRSHomeVisitReportOct2009.pdf
- Washington Department of Health Home Visit Needs Assessment <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/hvna/needassessdraft/default.htm>.
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Brooks Publishing, <http://www.brookespublishing.com/tools/asq/index.htm>
- WA State Institute for Public Policy – "Evidence-Based Programs to Prevent Children from Entering and Remaining in the Child Welfare System: Benefits and Costs for Washington" by Stephanie Lee, Steve Aos, and Marna Miller. <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/pub.asp?docid=08-07-3901>
- Council for Children and Families, Evidence-Based Home Visiting Programs, Program Evaluation Report 2009-2010 Programs, September 2010, by Christopher Blodgett, Ph.D. and Myah Houghten, MLA, Washington State University. [CCF EBHV Program Evaluation Report 2009-2010 Final.pdf](http://www.ccf.org/EBHV/Program%20Evaluation%20Report%202009-2010%20Final.pdf)