

PFSA Launches New Program – The Front Porch Project®

How many times have you witnessed a parent struggling with a child in the midst of a tantrum in a public place? Have you ever been concerned that your neighbor is leaving her young children home alone? How often have you observed a child in your neighborhood playing unsupervised in the street? How often have you struggled with questions about whether or how to help a child?

You're not alone. Studies show that many people are concerned about children in their communities, and would like to get involved and help families, but often do not know what to do. They might feel uneasy approaching a stranger, or feel that they can't really make a difference. Some people mistrust the child welfare system and don't know of other options for helping a family. Whatever the reason – ordinary citizens are often hesitant to help a child because they don't know what to do.

That's why the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA) is partnering with American Humane, a nationally recognized leader in the prevention of child maltreatment, to launch the Front Porch Project® (FPP) in Pennsylvania. The Front Porch Project® is a community-based primary prevention initiative based on the belief that everyone can -- and should -- become more aware of how to help protect children in their own community. It provides people with the knowledge, training and encouragement they need to become involved.

Developed by experts in the field of child welfare and abuse prevention, FPP is a two-day training that teaches members of the general public to:

- Identify when and how to get involved when they are concerned about a child.
- Review definitions, dynamics, and indicators of child abuse and neglect.
- Examine our personal approaches to action – how culture, gender and socioeconomics influence behavior.
- Explore a range of parenting approaches and discuss ways of disciplining and caring for children that can lead to abuse or neglect. Identify positive parenting and intervention strategies.
- Discuss how to ensure personal safety.
- Develop a personal action plan and a commitment to helping to protect children.

Participants who complete the training leave with the awareness, knowledge, skill and willingness to intervene for children. Their actions can impact thousands of children. For example, participants in other states who have completed FPP training have found some creative ways of helping families:

“I did some research on local community resources for families and shared the information with the other parents in my apartment complex.”

“I now watch my neighbor’s three young children one night a week so she can run errands or go shopping.”

“I wrote a letter to the grocery store so they would make a family-friendly checkout aisle that does not have candy in it, to help prevent stressful moments at checkout.”

“I threw a block party on my street to get to know my neighbors.”

PFSA is extremely pleased to be partnering with American Humane to bring the Front Porch Project® to Pennsylvania. We’ll be the first statewide initiative for FPP in the country, and our collaboration with American Humane is a new facet of our work. As the lead entity for FPP in the state, the initiative complements what PFSA has been doing for many years – training professionals to recognize and report child abuse and helping families strengthen and heal.

Presented by trained professionals in the field of child welfare, education and health services, the Front Porch Project® training will be offered the in several locations across the state this summer and fall. Check our website at www.pa-fsa.org for updates as training dates and locations are scheduled.

Did you know?

The assistance of just *one* adult can make a difference in protecting children and supporting families in your community. Any interaction, no matter how small, has the power to make a difference. There are many ways that you can make a difference today:

- ✓ Offer to babysit the children of a parent who is under stress.
- ✓ Talk quietly and without judgment to a parent who is on the verge of becoming angry with a child.
- ✓ Volunteer at or donate to a child- or family-serving agency in your community.
- ✓ Advocate for after-school activities for children.
- ✓ Let parents know when you see a positive interaction take place between them and their child.
- ✓ Show support and empathy for a child or parent by smiling or offering to help.
- ✓ Get to know your neighbors and their children.

We never know how we touch the lives of others. Together, we can build on the natural strengths and resiliency of children and families to support them through difficult times.

(Source: American Humane, “The Front Porch Project®”)

More About The Front Porch Project®

Adapted from information on www.americanhumane.org

Using a capacity-building approach, the Front Porch Project is implemented in partnership between American Humane and the “sustainer” organization in a local community. PFSA is the sustaining organization in Pennsylvania. We then work in partnership with local communities to bring the program to their location.

In the two-day Front Porch Project Community Training, participants are exposed to new intervention methods and given an opportunity to develop personal action plans to implement in their own communities. The community training is two full days of training, scheduled approximately four to six weeks apart. The timeframe between training days is necessary for participants to encounter opportunities in which to practice their new intervention skills, so that upon returning for the second day of training, these experiences may be processed and analyzed by the group. Participants must commit to attend both training days. Additionally, three participant follow-up contacts will occur in the 12 months following the completion of training, to gather information regarding the participants' actions and interventions after they have participated in the Community Training.

In Day 1 of the Community Training, participants:

- Identify when and how to get involved in situations involving a child.
- Assess their comfort level with intervening in those situations.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the definitions, dynamics and indicators of child abuse and neglect, as well as how the public child welfare system responds to reports of child maltreatment.
- Identify a range of parenting approaches.
- Develop comfort with different parenting approaches.
- Describe ways of disciplining and caring for children that can lead to maltreatment.
- Identify strategies for ensuring personal safety.
- Identify and demonstrate (through role playing) possible responses, interventions and problem-solving strategies.
- Develop a personal action plan.
- Complete an evaluation of the training.

In Day 2 of the Community Training, participants:

- Identify and describe involvement experiences since Day 1 of the Community Training, by evaluating their personal action plans and interventions taken thus far.
- Identify challenges to intervening safely, and methods to circumvent those challenges.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the impact that culture, gender and socioeconomic status can have on parenting and on actions to intervene on behalf of children.

- Describe the complex issues facing families today, including issues that affect the functioning of parents, children and families.
- Demonstrate an understanding of resiliency in children and the importance of prevention in helping to protect children and support families.
- Identify and demonstrate (through role playing) possible responses, interventions and problem-solving strategies.
- Complete an evaluation of the training.

American Humane provides PFSA with ongoing technical assistance, consultation and support as communities actively implement, evaluate and sustain the initiative. The Front Porch Project requires a partnership between a local community team of sustainers, connectors and supporters and American Humane. Each has key duties and responsibilities that will ensure successful outcomes of the project.

It is critical that the results of the Front Porch Project be systematically documented and analyzed to determine the extent to which the project is making a difference for participants, as well as for children and families in your community. To this end, PFSA and American Humane collect and analyze data measuring change in the knowledge, beliefs, attitude and behavior of participants. In 2009, the evaluation of the Front Porch Project was expanded to include a cross-site evaluation component, managed by American Humane. Different methods are used, including:

- Evaluations at the conclusion of each day of the Community Training.
- Personal action plans describing what interventions participants will attempt to undertake.
- Evaluations at the conclusion of the Train-the-Trainer session.
- Observation and assessment of trainee skill and performance in Phase III of the training.
- Participant action plan and intervention follow-up surveys completed six weeks, six months and 12 months following each participant's completion of the Community Training.