

The Alliance

SPRING 2009



PA Family Support Alliance *Protecting children from abuse*

INSIDE

- 2 Tough Time for Families
- 3 Network News
- 4 Psychiatric Disabilities Seminar
- 5 Mandated Reporter Training and more...

Continuing to meet the needs of both parents and professionals and working hard to prevent child abuse and neglect, Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA) has expanded and improved its services for 2009. Here's how:

- PFSA has a new mission statement: **Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance protects children by teaching citizens to recognize and report child abuse and neglect and by providing information, educational materials, and programs that promote positive parenting.**
- Our **website** has been redesigned to be more user-friendly and contain even more information on parenting, child abuse prevention, and mandated reporter training. Some new features on our site will be: the opportunity to quickly and easily find a family support program from the home page; listings of special events, training sessions and seminars; the most current information in the child welfare field; easy links to order materials for parents or professionals.
- New **training topics**, such as our seminar "Parents With Psychiatric Disabilities: Strategies for Child

Welfare Services and Family Support Programs." This full-day training will give social service and child welfare staff an opportunity to gain practical skills to understand and assist with the special needs of parents with mental illness. See page 4 for information on this important training. Workshops for professionals and parents regarding the economy and its impact on families will be held this spring in both eastern and western Pennsylvania.

- PFSA won the Gold Award in the category of Non-Profit Annual Report for its **2008 Calendar and Annual Report**. The award was given by International Association of Business Communicators/Harrisburg Chapter; our work was submitted for consideration by Elizabeth Messner of Print Solutions and Design Agency.
- PFSA is now part of the **National Effective Parenting Initiative**, a strong supporter of grass roots initiatives that increase the likelihood that every child in America is raised effectively by parents who have received the best possible parenting education. ❖

Mission

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance protects children by teaching citizens to recognize and report child abuse and neglect by providing information, educational materials and programs that promote positive parenting.

Families in Tough Economic Times

The difficult economic situation that most families are now experiencing causes stress and anxiety about the financial future as talk of unemployment rates, rising debt, falling housing prices and rising prices become topics of regular conversation. The worries of parents trickle down to their children.

Depleted savings and decreased bank accounts can hurt the family in immediate ways, but how you talk to kids about the family's money matters both now and down the road. Your child's lifelong relationship with money begins with you. Here are some tips for helping your children when economic times are hard:

- **Understand your own feelings about the situation.** Shock and denial are the first reactions most people experience with unplanned changes. How much stress you experience in a financial bind depends largely on the meaning you have attached to it. Reassess your priorities and try to look at as many positive options as possible.
- **Don't make money problems issues for the child.** Create a balance between sharing too little and too much information with children. Share enough information to not hide obvious problems, but don't expect a child to meet an adult's need to vent or discuss problems. Talk to friends, financial planners or counselors instead of children.
- **Figure out some concrete ways to address your problems.** Your child will see that you are doing your best to deal with the difficulties and will feel less frightened by the situation. Wait until you know how your financial situation will affect your children

before telling them about any changes to be made. For example, don't tell children, "we may have to sell the house," until you are sure that it will happen.

- **Let your child see you working on the problem.** Don't overwhelm children with the details of what you are doing, but let them know that you are working with the electric company to pay the bill, for example, or that you have cut out some spending to help your financial situation.
- **Use the economy to talk with your child** about words he is hearing on the news or in conversation; for example, give

a simple explanation of how the stock market or retirement funds work.

- **Talk about wants versus needs.** There's no better time to help kids understand the pitfalls of impulse purchases and buying on credit. Help them be smart consumers by teaching them how to shop and save.

PFSA is introducing a new brochure in our parenting series, "Help for Parents in Tough Economic Times," in April. We are also offering two training sessions for parents and professionals on the topic. Visit our website at www.pa-fsa.org or call 800-448-4906 for details. ❖

did you know?

- ✓ Living in poverty is a big risk factor in child abuse. Families with incomes under \$15,000 per year are 14 times more likely to abuse and 44 times more likely to neglect their children than families with incomes over \$30,000 per year. Poor families are more likely to be under stress, and stress is linked to child abuse.
- ✓ Children in large families (more than four children) are twice as likely to be physically neglected compared to children in families with two or three children. As families have to take care of larger numbers of children, they have increased pressure on their finances to make sure all of the children have their basic needs met. Without appropriate support, the demands can be overwhelming.
- ✓ Nationally, the recession is having a greater impact on women than on men. The unemployment rate is going up faster for women than men. In 2008, women suffered a larger decline in wages than men. Women are also more at risk to lose their homes since they are 32% more likely to have a subprime mortgage. The report also found that non-married women have 48% less net worth than non-married men, and they are less likely to participate in employer sponsored retirement savings programs.
- ✓ One in three children in Pennsylvania lives in a low-income family, defined as less than 200% of federal poverty income guidelines.
- ✓ One in three single parent families in Pennsylvania has incomes below the federal poverty income guidelines. Approximately 20% of the state's children live with their mothers only; almost 6% live with their fathers only.

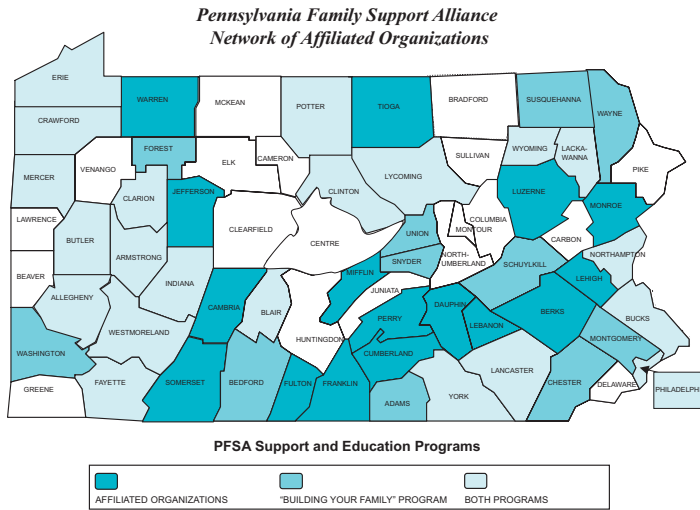
Sources: *Executive Summary of the national incidence study of child abuse and neglect; Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center; Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children; Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee*

Network News

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA) offers technical assistance, training, quality materials and marketing assistance to more than 50 affiliated organizations across the state. In addition, dozens of organizations, Children and Youth offices and individual providers have informal partnerships with PFSA, using our materials and attending training sessions. We recently welcomed two new affiliates to our network, **HANDS of Wyoming County and the Children's Aid Society of Clearfield County.**

Children's Aid Society of Clearfield County has been around since 1890; its current location was built in 1917 as a Children's Home. Its current programs include adoption in 14 counties, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Clearfield County, Child Care Center, the Healthy Marriage Program, the Nurturing Parenting Program, and PA Pre-K Counts Preschool Program. Its affiliation with PFSA focuses on the Nurturing Program but also uses PFSA resources in its other support groups. The Nurturing Program is a cost-effective, child abuse prevention program that assists families with building resilient and protective factors. The program promotes healthy social and emotional development of all family members.

In Wyoming County, HANDS provides services to families such as the Parents as Teachers home visitation program, Pre-K County and several



PFSA programs exist in 46 Pennsylvania counties.

parent support groups. One unique program is Relatives as Parents, focusing on kinship care relationships. With technical assistance from PFSA, they sponsor a parent support group called "Parenting With Pride" and several parenting classes. Parents in the county can also find story hours for children and a parent lending library at the HANDS Family Resource Center in Tunkhannock.

The Lehman Center sponsors a family support program for several young mothers, ages 15-18, at a high school in York. Some have been coming to the group for two years now and a few young men have taken an active role in the group. Inside the group, a safe and helpful forum has formed as the girls talk about the fears of being a mom, relationships with their families, how to get extra help, and the joys of being a mother. Many of the moms help the pregnant teens by giving them advice on worries, hospitals, labor, and procedures. The girls bond and share their feelings where they may have felt very alone before the program. ❖

Growing a Group

Project Child is a long-time PFSA affiliate in the Lehigh Valley. One program, Parent Tree, moved from Easton to Bethlehem late last spring. Changing locations meant starting over to build a thriving group. The new location is close to low-cost housing, where the needs are great. "Our first mom was a member of the church from the neighborhood. She came faithfully for two months, even though, often, no one else showed up," says Marcie Lightwood, group facilitator. "We tried sending flyers to area agencies, but no luck. I then invited a few moms I ran into through other work and from the Easton group. Project Child also referred parents and, suddenly, we had a small group."

Marcie sent e-mails to many agencies announcing the "success" of the struggling group. Like the old saying, "success follows success," when word was out that the program was running well, more people attended. The group now has a core of six members, who come every week and several more who attend when they can. Topics are varied and geared to parents of young children. A recent discussion of sleeping was very lively. "I had to wave my arms to tell them it was time to end so we could let our child care person go home!" Marcie said. The parents felt welcomed and heard and came back the next week.

The moral of this story: Just like reinforcing positive behavior with a child, it pays to build on success rather than pay much attention to negatives.

For more information, contact Project Child at 610-954-9561. ❖



Child Abuse Prevention Month Cards and Posters

Express your commitment to the prevention of child abuse and neglect by purchasing note cards or art prints featuring the unique, colorful murals of the 2008 observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month. For order information, call PFSA at 800-448-4906 or visit www.pa-fsa.org.

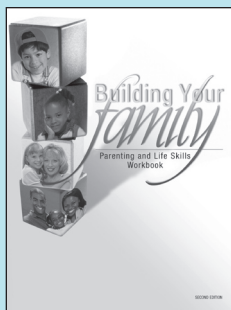


Translating for PFSA

Amy Meyer, Messiah College

As a senior Spanish major at Messiah College, I found an internship with PFSA in my search for job experience prior to graduating, and I am so glad that I did. In my time with the organization, I have had the opportunity to assist the Latino community of Pennsylvania by translating the "Building Your Family" parenting curriculum, as well as several brochures for parents. I also attended a Mandated Reporter Training session, which really taught me a lot about who mandated reporters are and how to report child abuse. A bonus was that I learned a lot

about how to create a strong family and about positive parenting skills, which I will be able to put to use when I have a family. But, even though I have learned about the devastating effects of child abuse, my time at PFSA has given me hope that child abuse can be prevented. The organization does wonderful work in supporting parenting programs across the state, and the mandated reporter training meets the needs of thousands of professionals every year. I am proud to be a part of an organization that is making such a positive impact on so many people's lives. ♦



PFSA produces an array of educational materials for parents, including the parenting curriculum "Building Your Family." We also develop the training materials that we use to train thousands of mandated reporters each year. For a catalog of our publications, call 800-448-4906.

Parents With Psychiatric Disabilities: Strategies for Child Welfare Services and Family Support Programs

Thursday, May 14, 2009

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Central Pennsylvania College Conference Center

College Hill & Valley Roads
Summerdale PA 17093
(5 miles west of Harrisburg)

This training will provide strategies to help you effectively work with parents with mental health issues. We will explore how to properly assess families where mental health is a risk factor; the prevalence of parents with psychiatric disabilities in the child welfare system and Pennsylvania's response to these families; psychiatric disabilities through the eyes of children, adults with mental illness, and adult children; and how to develop strategies to support and educate parents as you work to keep children with their birth parents.

Registration fee:

\$40 per person

**Includes training materials,
continental breakfast
and buffet lunch**

**Contact PFSA at
800-448-4906 or visit
www.pa-fsa.org.**

Presented by: Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance,
Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania, and
University of Pennsylvania Collaborative on Community Integration

Mandated Reporter Training Program Offers “Home Delivery”

With budgets getting tighter and tighter, PFSA’s Mandated Reporter Training program is an even better value than in the past. For schools, faith-based organizations, child care centers, libraries, community service providers, and many other DPW-approved entities, PFSA provides training in recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect **free of charge and at your site**. Your staff need not travel, and time away from your office or program is kept to a minimum.

Training topics include both a three- and six-hour version of “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse” and three-hour classes in “Recognizing and Responding to Child Neglect” and “Responding to Disclosures of Child Abuse.” There is also a “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse” curriculum designed specifically for clergy and faith-based organizations. All training programs are approved for DPW hours, PA Keystone Stars, and Act 48.

Continuing education units in social work are also available by request.

To receive FREE training, organizations must provide a minimum of 15 participants for each training session scheduled. Training sessions are still available, but availability is limited and is on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information or to reserve your space today, call 800-448-4906.❖

Trainer Spotlight

Tom Trafalski

After earning a Bachelor of Science degree in education from Duquesne University, Tom began his career working as a secondary school teacher for the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education. After receiving his Master of Social Work degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1977, he began working in the child welfare system, first as a casework supervisor and then as a training supervisor.

Tom blended his interest in teaching with his interest in social work while working for Allegheny County Children, Youth, and Family Services. He began training for the Child Welfare Training Program in 1993 and began working as an independent consultant after 28 years in child welfare.

Tom was one of PFSA’s first trainers and has been training for PFSA for almost nine years. He is well received by all audiences due to both his training style and his passion for children.

Tom lives with his wife, Becky, and their many animals in Coraopolis, a suburb of Pittsburgh. As the number one fan of the Rolling Stones, one of Tom’s favorite pastimes is attending their concerts.

PFSA is fortunate to have trainers with the experience and expertise of Tom Trafalski! ❖



Tom and his wife, Becky, in London, celebrating his birthday with the Rolling Stones.



Online Class for Mandated Reporters

In addition to face-to-face training programs on recognizing and reporting child abuse, PFSA’s Mandated Reporter Training program will soon be offering an online class for professionals. The program is expected to go live within the next couple of months.

The online “Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse” program will allow participants to log in at their convenience, follow the program at their own pace, and take the test that follows. The online session will cover topics related to the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), including how to recognize the possible signs and symptoms of child abuse and how to report child abuse when it is suspected.❖

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Protecting children from abuse

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“Visit us at www.pa-fsa.org”



Children are
the *hands*
by which we
take hold of
heaven.

Henry Ward Beecher