

The Alliance

FALL 2016

INSIDE

- 2 Be Part of the Solution
- 3 A Recovering Parent's Story
- 4 Legislative Update
- 5 Test Your Knowledge of Mandated Reporting

Mission

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance educates, informs and leads communities to action to protect children from abuse and neglect.

pa-fsa.org

Recovering Families: Helping Parents with Substance Use Disorders

More than eight million children in the U.S. live with at least one parent who was addicted to alcohol or another drug during the past year. These children face an increased risk of maltreatment; children of parents with substance use disorder (SUD) are more likely to be abused or neglected than children of parents who do not abuse substances. By impairing parents' judgment and priorities, SUDs often influence how parents discipline their children and how much consistency and supervision they provide. The time and money parents spend on getting and using drugs often means they don't have the resources to meet basic needs. In addition, families affected by SUDs often have a number of other problems – including mental illness, domestic violence, poverty, and high levels of stress – which also are associated with child maltreatment.

The good news is that effective treatment is available and people can, and do, recover from SUDs and resume their parenting responsibilities. While parents choose to participate in treatment and recovery for themselves, children are often a motivator for change. See page 3 for a great example!

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance (PFSA) has been providing information for recovering parents for more than a decade, particularly with *Recovering Families*, a **parenting curriculum that specifically addresses the needs of recovering parents**. The goal

of the program is to help parents talk with their children about addiction and recovery, discover real-life strategies for balancing the demands of parenting and recovery, and translate the concepts of twelve-step recovery into the realm of parenting.

“I like that it (*Recovering Families*) goes deep into how you feel in recovery. I figured out that I wasn't a bad parent...I was a good mom in a bad addiction.”

Tina, recovering parent of two daughters and a son.

Recently, PFSA Program Director Beth Bitler presented a workshop on how *Recovering Families* is used across PA at the Child Welfare League of America's national conference. In evaluating the program with 165 parents in treatment programs, PFSA found that almost all (96%) said they “learned a lot” about talking with their children about addiction, while 86% “learned a lot” about preventing relapse. When asked if “this class changed the way you parent,” 95% said their understanding of the impact of SUDs on children had increased “a lot,” and 82% said they felt “a lot” more capable of parenting and staying sober. We're proud of the progress we're making with *Recovering Families*, but there is much more to do! ●

Be Part of the Solution

Every day, when you look at the news, you probably hear something about child abuse. The tragedies of child deaths, the stories of children neglected by caregivers. . .the world can be a very dark place for families. While PFSA works hard to teach mandated reporters, community members and parents how to prevent child abuse, we can't do it alone. Everyone can be part of the solution and protect children across Pennsylvania - by sponsoring a training session, stepping in to help in your own neighborhood, or making a contribution to PFSA. Here are a few examples:



In May, the **Greater Latrobe Softball Team** donated the proceeds of their home run derby to PFSA. "Our fundraiser started

out simply because I, as a student teacher, had a requirement to do a service to the school," said Marisa McAndrews. "The Greater Latrobe High School softball team stepped up to help me. In particular, one captain on the team, senior Jessica Tatone, led the planning for our school-wide home run derby event. We planned for about 2 months and, while the turnout was less than we expected, I'm hopeful the team will hold the event again next year." The team was raised \$200, which PFSA used in the observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Park Avenue Kids Korner conducted the "PAKK Child Abuse Awareness Campaign" in April and donated over \$370 to PFSA from proceeds generated by T-shirt sales. Owners Thomas and Amy Sandholm organized the effort in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month.



We're fortunate to have partners like the **Harrisburg Senators Baseball Club**, who generously donated tickets to PFSA's *Dad & Me* program, which provides positive activities for fathers and children in Harrisburg. And thanks to **Water Golf**

for their support of our evening with the Senators. Many of the participants are returning home after incarceration and enjoy re-connecting with their kids. Thanks for supporting positive parenting!

You can support child abuse prevention by simply purchasing from Amazon



Smile (smile.amazon.com) as Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to PFSA. It doesn't cost you anything extra. On your first visit to Amazon Smile, use the search box to type in Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance and hit enter. Your selection is remembered every time you sign on to Amazon and eligible purchases mean important support for PFSA! ●



With your support, our *Recovering Families* program helps families break free from addiction.

Please contribute to PFSA to offset the cost of providing *Recovering Families* across Pennsylvania – outreach to parents, reprinting books and training for facilitators – so we can reach as many families as possible. Tax-deductible donations of any size are important, and 100% of your contribution goes directly to support community programming. Not only will you enable us to help parents recovering from addiction transform their lives, you'll be helping their kids to be healthy parents in the future.



To make a donation, mail your check with the form below or visit our website to donate with a credit card.

Name: _____

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“My Whole Life Changed” by Amy Elisabeth Green

My name is Amy Green and I am a woman in long-term recovery from addiction. I believe I was born an addict. I started to use drugs and alcohol at the age of 12. I came from a very loving, structured and happy home. There were always consequences to my actions and my parents were very involved in my life. I made it through high school, college (barely) and had numerous jobs that I couldn't keep due to my addiction after graduating college.

My addiction consumed my every thought. I lived to use and used to live. I was addicted to different drugs at different periods. I was like a human garbage can, consuming whatever I could to get outside of myself. Even though I consider myself an intelligent woman, I never used the coping skills that I had obtained as a child. I loved the chaos. I caused a great deal of harm to others and myself. I took years off my parents' lives by my irresponsible, high risk, and totally unpredictable behavior. I was in and out of jails and rehab institutions.

Then I found out I was pregnant. I remember that day with such intense clarity. **The moment I found out I was pregnant my whole life changed.** I knew why I was put on this earth and it was to be an exceptional mother. The disease of addiction is ruthless; you will put that drug in front of your wife, husband, or children. You will put the drug before eating, sleeping, or even self-care. I had to *get* clean for myself. I had to want recovery. I had to want to live more than I wanted to die. My motivation for *staying* clean is my beautiful, healthy daughter Scarlett Hope.

There are lots of re-sources out there to help someone who is about to become a parent – I took birthing/parenting classes and used several programs to make sure I was doing my best to be healthy; for example, the Nurse-Family Partnership Program was life-changing. There also many pathways to recovery. I chose the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous.



Amy and her daughter Scarlett.

My life is complete today. I am an excellent mother, daughter, sister, and friend. I have over two years clean and sober as well. I also chose a career that makes sure I get to give back to the community through education. I work for Drug-Free Workplace PA, a nonprofit organization that is funded by a grant from the PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency. We help create and implement drug-free workplace programs and educate Pennsylvanians on the dangers of drug abuse through both online trainings and in-person trainings at schools, churches, rehabs, corporations, and other organizations.

Amy helps PFSA spread the word about the importance of positive parenting in recovery. To find out more about Drug-Free Workplace PA, visit www.DrugFreeWorkplacePA.org. ●

Share Your Story

If you are reading this newsletter, you have an interest in helping children. Why? Why do you do what you do?

Tell us about how **you are making a difference in a child's life.** Your story has the power to inspire others to create change in their neighborhoods, churches and businesses. PFSA is looking for stories of how both organizations and individuals make PA a safer place for kids. Together, we can foster hope and build communities where every child can grow and thrive, free from abuse and neglect!

Please take a moment and send your stories to Ellen Brown, Director of Development, or post a message on our Facebook page.

Just like you, it will make a difference. ●



Closing a Loophole in Legislation

The many changes that were made to the Child Protective Services Law were intended to provide greater protection to Pennsylvania's children. As with any major change, we can expect some bumps in the road. Inadvertently, medical professionals, medical staff and clergy were omitted from the group of people who are required to obtain background certifications (formally called clearances) as part of employment or volunteering. The General Assembly has recognized this error and has introduced legislation to close this "loophole" situation.

Senator John Sabatina (D- Philadelphia) has introduced Senate Bill 1156, which defines health care personnel as a health care provider, including a "health care

provider who provides health care services in a health care facility or an employee of a health care facility." It does not include services provided by administrative or other support personnel unless they have direct contact with children.

SB 1156 would require that any health care personnel or member of the clergy responsible for the child's welfare or having direct contact with children, obtain background certificates. Those whose background certifications are older than 60 months, or who have not previously obtained the background certifications, are required to obtain the certifications by December, 31, 2016. Recertification is required every 5 years. The required background certifications are the same as

for other employees requiring certification – ChildLine child abuse history, PA State Police criminal history and FBI criminal history.

In addition, the term "health care volunteer" has been added to the volunteers who require certifications. This applies only to adult health care volunteers. As with other adult volunteers, the FBI clearance would not be required if the person has lived in PA for at least 10 years and swears and affirms in writing that they have not been convicted of any of the prohibitive crimes. At the time of this newsletter, SB 1156 is with the Senate Rules and Executive Nominations Committee. ●

ChildLine
1-800-932-0313
Child abuse hotline available 24 hours a day

ChildLine provides information, counseling, and referral services for families and children to ensure the safety and well-being of the children of Pennsylvania. The toll-free intake line is available 24/7 to receive reports of suspected child abuse. Callers, other than mandated reporters, may remain anonymous.

What You Can Do to Help an Overwhelmed Parent

If you know the family:

- Empathize by offering parenting suggestions based on your own experience (say things like "here's what I am trying now..." rather than "here's what works better...").
- Find ways to interact socially, not just around a problem. Connect through your children to establish a relationship.
- Offer whatever means of help you are comfortable in giving, such as child care while the parent takes a needed break, doubling your favorite recipe and sharing it, inviting the family over for coffee.

If you see something happen in public:

- Use empathy – not judgement – by making a supportive suggestion, a smile or an offer of help.
- Divert the parent's or child's attention so things calm down.
- If it seems necessary, contact a person in authority (like a store manager) or police. Get a license plate number if the child is not safe in a car.

If you want to help families in general:

- Attend PFSA's Front Porch Project, a free community dialogue held across PA. Visit our website for locations.

- Become a mentor to a child and get involved in your community's organizations.
- Look for ways to make your neighborhood a safe place, like clean parks and playgrounds or family-friendly businesses. ●





Test your knowledge about reporting child abuse!

• • • TRUE OR FALSE? • • •

In order to make a report to ChildLine, you must have heard about the abuse from the child.

False. The child does not need to come before you in order for a mandated reporter to make a report of suspected child abuse. Changes to the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) clarified this point. You do not need to see or talk to the child in order to make a report. Once you have reasonable cause to suspect, a report must be made.

If the identity of the person who allegedly abused the child is not known, then the mandated reporter doesn't need to make a report.

False. You do not need to know the identity of the person responsible for the suspected child abuse in order to make a report of suspected child abuse. It will be part of the investigation to determine who abused the child. You do not need to know their name, their address or their relationship to the child. All you need is reasonable cause to suspect someone has abused the child.

A fifteen-year-old that you know through your role as a volunteer coach tells you that she has been involved sexually with an eighteen-year old. You are not required to report this as suspected child abuse.

Partially true. Consensual sex between a teen who is at least 14 years of age with another person who is at least 14 years of age and within four years of age of the teen is excluded as child abuse under the definition of sexual abuse in the CPSL. Any indication that the sex may not be consensual would require that a report of suspected child abuse be made. Additionally, any indication that a sex crime may have been committed would require a report to be made.

Members of the clergy are excluded from mandated reporting.

Partially true. The CPSL includes clergy as mandated reporters when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is victim of abuse. The law does provide a limited exemption for clergy (clergy of "any regularly established church or religious organization") only:

- If the clergyman was acting "in the course of his duties."
- If the information was received "secretly and in confidence." Courts have required it be of a "penitential nature," such as seeking spiritual advice or absolution.

Employees who are minors and have direct contact with children are mandated reporters.

False. Only adults are considered to be mandated reporters. PFSA suggests that minors who have direct contact with other minors through work or volunteering be considered in a reporting policy so that they know whom to tell if they have a concern. ●

Want to know more about how to recognize and report child abuse? We offer free on-site training at your organization, church or school. Choose your date and time and we'll come to you with the most updated information presented by our expert trainers. Schedule your training by contacting PFSA at 717-238-0937 or visiting our website – www.pa-fsa.org. ●

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