

Parents as Teachers Supports Quality Home Visiting for Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregivers

Family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care, or informal care, is the most common nonparental source of infant and toddler care across all socioeconomic groups. Over the past several years, there has been increasing interest in understanding ways to support FFN care providers of young children. One effective and creative way of providing needed support and resources to FFN care providers is through home visits. Providing FFN care providers with essential child development information and supporting them to improve the quality of care and enhance the environment in which children are being raised help ensure that children are stimulated during their most important time of brain development.

Research underlines the effectiveness of the Parents as Teachers *Supporting Care Providers through Personal Visits* curriculum.

- ▶ A recent random assignment study of the Caring for Quality Project by Cornell University researchers found that care provider visits using the Parents as Teachers *Supporting Care Providers through Personal Visits* curriculum significantly increased the quality of care. When the curriculum was used with care providers, the results showed:¹
 - Increased overall quality of the care setting;
 - Increased language and reasoning experiences and learning activities; and
 - Increased social development.
- ▶ The Early Head Start Enhanced Home Visiting Pilot Project included Parents as Teachers-trained parent educators also trained in the *Supporting Care Providers through Personal Visits* curriculum to provide services to FFN care providers. The project successfully:²
 - Raised care providers' awareness that they play an important role in children's healthy development;
 - Delivered child development information, ideas for activities, and other useful resources to care providers;
 - Increased consistency in child-rearing beliefs and practices between parents and care providers;
 - Increased social support for care providers; and
 - Promoted positive changes in care providers' practices.

The National Center for Parents as Teachers believes that the crucial early years of children's lives are critical for optimal development and that we must support young children's development in all settings.³

- ▶ Research shows that FFN care is the most popular choice for parents of infants and toddlers across all socioeconomic groups because of the familiarity and the special relationships that already exist between the caregivers and the children, the cultural continuity between home and care setting, and the more flexible schedule for working parents.
- ▶ Despite these benefits, many informal settings do not adequately address health and safety concerns or provide the enrichment of high quality care settings. For example, these settings offer fewer enriched language and literacy experiences for children, more extensive exposure to TV, limited efforts to "baby-proof" and keep the environment safe for children, and limited awareness of how neurotoxins (such as cigarette smoke) affect children. These quality issues have a particularly strong impact on children of less educated mothers and on those from lower-income families, both of whom are more likely to rely on FFN care.⁴

¹ McCabe, L.A. & Cochran, M. (2008). Can Home Visiting Increase the Quality of Home-based Child Care? Findings from the Caring For Quality Project. *Cornell Early Childhood Program Research Brief*. No. 3.

² Paulsell, D., Mekos, D., Del Grosso, P., Banghart, P. & Nogales, R. (April, 2006). Reaching Out to Kith and Kin Caregivers in Early Head Start. *Issue Brief*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

³ See Parents as Teachers' "Mission" and "Core Values" at <http://www.parentsasteachers.org>

⁴ Early Head Start National Resource Center (2006). *Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care in Early Head Start: Strengthening Relationships and Enhancing Quality*. Technical Assistance Paper No. 11, Washington, D.C.

Supporting Care Providers through Personal Visits and Supporting Infant/Toddler Care Providers curricula provide research-based information to address key areas in which FFN caregivers need the most support.⁵

- ▶ The curricula address care providers' needs for 1) supporting networks, 2) information about child development, 3) health and safety, 4) ideas about activities to do with children, 5) parent-caregiver relationships and child-caregiver relationships.
- ▶ The curricula represent the culmination of careful reviews of the most recent research and input from experts and practitioners in the field, just as the Born to Learn® curricula do.⁶ The curricula include handouts for providers and for parents to build the connection and continuity between home and care settings.
- ▶ The vast majority of the programs using *Supporting Care Providers through Personal Visits* and/or *Supporting Infant/Toddler Care Providers* curricula rated them as “useful” or “very useful.” More than 95% of programs surveyed rated the handouts that providers give to parents to inform parents about the visits they received as especially useful.⁷

Parents as Teachers is a leader in early childhood home visitation for parents and FFN care providers.

- ▶ Research supports the effectiveness of home visitation as a method of supporting family, friend and neighbor care providers.⁸ These informal care providers are unlikely to attend other professional development opportunities. In fact, the *Supporting Care Providers through Personal Visits* curriculum is cited as the most widely used by programs providing home visits to informal care providers.⁹
- ▶ Home visitation programs that provide care provider visits can maximize impact by extending “what they already know and do well”¹⁰ to reach more children and provide consistent information to parents and providers.
- ▶ Agencies and organizations that support informal child care providers can use the curricula to provide more structured outreach to providers.



For additional information about PAT's *Supporting Care Providers through Personal Visits (SCPV)* or *Supporting Infant Toddler Care Providers*, please visit our website at www.parentsasteachers.org, or contact Kerry Caverly, Director of the Center for Professional Development at kerry.caverly@parentsasteachers.org.

⁵ Paulsell et al, April, 2006.

⁶ Parents as Teachers National Center (2005). *Born to Learn Prenatal to 3 Curriculum*. St. Louis, MO: Author.

Parents as Teachers National Center (2008). *Born to Learn 3 Years to Kindergarten Entry*. St. Louis, MO: Author.

⁷ Guskin, K.A., Wakabayashi, T., Caverly, K.K. (2008). *Supporting Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregivers through Home Visitation*. Poster Presented at Head Start's Ninth National Research Conference, Washington, D.C.

⁸ Pausell, D., Mekos, D., Del Grosso, P., Banghart, P., & Nogales, R. (January, 2006). *The Enhanced Home Visiting Pilot Project: How Early Head Start Programs are Reaching Out to Kith and Kin Caregivers: Final Interim Report*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/>

⁹ Porter, T. (March, 2007). *Assessing Initiatives for Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care: An Overview of Models and Evaluations*. Research-to-Policy Connections No. 5, www.researchconnections.org.

¹⁰ Powell, D.R. (2008). *Who's Watching the Babies? Improving the Quality of Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care*. Washington, D.C.: Zero to Three.