



## Parents as Teachers Technical Assistance Brief

### Establishing and Adjusting Caseload Size

*This is part of a series of Technical Assistance Briefs published by the Parents as Teachers national office designed to address emerging issues around the Parents as Teachers evidence-based model. These briefs are informed by research and evaluation findings, technical assistance efforts, feedback from stakeholders, and discussion within Parents as Teachers learning communities.*

#### **What information will I find in this brief?**

The purpose of this TA Brief is to assist Parents as Teachers affiliates in determining a caseload size that facilitates quality services for each family served, is manageable, and permits time for all the responsibilities of parent educators and supervisors who carry a caseload. We recommend reviewing caseloads at least annually and anytime there is a change in circumstances.

#### **What is the current essential requirement for caseload size?**

The 12<sup>th</sup> Essential Requirement sets the maximum visits per month, recognizing that different communities and families will require a different intensity of service. The **maximum** number of visits per month that a full-time parent educator can complete is 48 in their 1<sup>st</sup> year and 60 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year and beyond. The lower number of visits new parent educators should complete monthly during their first year reflects the additional time new parent educators typically need for supervision, planning personal visits, and shadowing more experienced parent educators. This assumes “full-time” parent educators devote 40 hours a week to providing services to families; the maximum is proportionally lower for part-time parent educators.

#### **Factors to consider in determining caseload size for your affiliate**

The following factors should be considered when determining the caseload for parent educators in your Parents as Teachers affiliate, this is not an exhaustive list and your affiliate may have other factors to consider:

- > **Parent educator responsibilities** beyond providing personal visits, screenings, and resource connections to families. Consider the number of group connections your affiliate offers and the amount of planning, preparation, and time providing those group connections each parent educator will be responsible for, as well as additional data collection, family recruitment and retention activities, or other administrative duties, that should be balanced with a lower case load.
  - For **supervisors who carry a caseload**, consider the percent of time the supervisor is devoting to administrative tasks such as grant management, reflective supervision, etc. and subtract that from their full-time equivalent as a parent educator to determine an appropriate caseload. For example, if a supervisor is expected to spend 10 hours per week (0.25 FTE) on providing PAT services to families, then their caseload should be no higher than 25% of a full-time parent educator caseload.
- > **Visit frequency.** The 11<sup>th</sup> Parents as Teachers Essential Requirement states that all families receive at least 12 personal visits per year, or monthly visits, and that families with 2 or more high needs characteristics receive at least 24 visits per year. This is a minimum and many affiliates chose to provide bimonthly visits to all families, or even weekly visits. In cases where parent educators are providing more visits per month to families they serve, their caseloads will naturally be lower to stay in compliance with the 12<sup>th</sup> Essential Requirement regarding the total number of visits per month.



- > The **families your affiliate serves and their high needs characteristics**. In addition to a higher visit frequency, families with many high needs characteristics may require additional time for the parent educator to work on family well-being in and out of visits.
- > **Number of children per family**. Parents as Teachers affiliates serve the whole family, but providing development-centered parent education and model components such as screenings are provided per child and take more time in families with multiple children than in families with only one eligible child.
- > **Travel time and geography**. Parents as Teachers' maximum number of visits per month (48 for 1<sup>st</sup> year parent educators and 60 for 2<sup>nd</sup> year and beyond) assumes a round trip travel time of 30 minutes per visit. For affiliates in rural areas or those serving large geographical regions, travel times may be much longer which would necessitate smaller caseloads. Whereas, affiliates serving very small regions, such as those associated with a house authority or shelter providing personal visits on site, caseloads could be higher.
- > **Languages spoken** and other cultural needs. If parent educators are working with language interpreters or if they are required to translate materials for families, that may increase the time necessary per personal visit and necessitate a lower caseload.

**Optimal vs Maximum number of visits per month**

The essential requirement regarding caseload size provides a maximum, not a goal. Parents as Teachers recommends that parent educators complete 40 visits per month during their 1<sup>st</sup> year and 50 visits per month in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year and beyond. This provides time for missed visits, make-up visits, professional development, staff meetings, and community involvement.

**Using a point system for managing caseload size**

One way to determine an appropriate caseload size for your affiliate's parent educators is to use the point system, found in the Model Implementation Guide. Supervisors can assign point values for each family on the caseload based on visit frequency, travel, time, number of children, and other considerations. The point total should be 50 or less.

Points can be assigned as follows:

Monthly visits	1 point
Twice monthly visits	2 points
Weekly visits	4 points
Multiple children	0.5 points for families with multiple children enrolled
Round trip travel	0.5 points added per additional 30 minutes

**Point System Example**

This example shows how the point system can be used for three parent educators.

Parent Educator A

- 15 families with 2+ children enrolled, twice monthly visits. 2.5 points per family, 37.5 points.
- 6 families with 1 enrolled child and twice monthly visits. 2 points per family, 12 points.

**Total:** 49.5 points, 21 families

Parent Educator B

- 10 families with twice monthly visits and one child. 2 points x 10=20
- 12 families with twice monthly visits and 1 hour round trip travel time for personal visits. 2.5 points per family, 30 points.

**Total:** 50 points, 22 families