



**Parents as Teachers Technical Assistance Brief**

**Participation Agreement and Consent for Services**

*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 explain why and how to use a participation agreement and consent for services form with families. Parents as Teachers has provided a sample example form that outlines the services Parents as Teachers affiliates will provide as well as the rights and responsibilities of families receiving those services. The Parents as Teachers Sample Example Participation Agreement and Consent for Services also includes a specific consent from families for file reviews by an affiliate's TA provider and as part of the Parents as Teachers Quality Endorsement and Improvement process which all Parents as Teachers affiliates participate in every five years. Please be sure to include language in your consent forms that matches the data sharing that your affiliate participates in for endorsement, evaluation, funding, and/or technical assistance.

**What is the role of consent in the Parents as Teachers model?**

Much of the success of Parents as Teachers' evidence based model is built on the relationships and partnerships parent educators have with families. One of the guiding principles of the Parents as Teachers model is that family participation is voluntary. We realize that when families choose to participate, they are more successful. Providing a participation agreement and consent for services helps build trust with the family. Confidentiality is key to trust and it is important that we are clear with families about what confidentiality covers, including when we must share information as mandated reporters.

**What other factors should Parents as Teachers affiliates consider?**

Many Parents as Teachers affiliates are subject to federal statutes such as HIPAA and FERPA, as well as other federal and state laws with regards to record keeping and disclosure of information. Affiliates must inform families of their rights and responsibilities regarding their files, how the affiliate will store those files, as well as how, when, and why the affiliate may share those records. A Participation Agreement and Consent for Services is a tool affiliates can use as part of that process. The second section of the example form, in the box, specifically covers affiliates sharing of information with TA providers and with Parents as Teachers as part of the Quality Endorsement and Improvement process. The purpose of this file sharing is to help ensure the best possible services to families.

**How do I use the Participation Agreement and Consent for Services form?**

- > When filling out the "What Can You Expect?" and "What Will We Ask of You?" sections of the fillable form, be sure to include any and all program specific aspects of the services you provide. For example, if your program has a policy regarding cancelling or missed visits, be sure that is clearly indicated.
- > The process of informed consent for services is as important as the signed document itself. The parent educator talks through each item on the family agreement with the parent(s); invites the parent(s) to share any questions or concerns about the agreement; and tells the



parents that if they do change their mind about this agreement, they can always let the parent educator know.

- > Consent should be obtained by the end of Foundational Visit One. As part of the Opening, parent educators can discuss this form in addition to the Welcome to Parents as Teachers handout. Some programs choose to obtain written consent as part of their intake process.
- > Consent should be obtained from each enrolled parent/guardian, using a separate consent form for each. Consent should be re-obtained with the family annually and should be signed by the parent educator as well.
- > A signed consent form is a necessary part of the family file, whether your program chooses to use the Sample Example Participation Agreement and Consent for Services or another consent form.

**What if we already have an agency or program specific participation agreement and consent for services? / Can we develop an agency or program specific participation agreement and consent for services?**

Affiliates can develop agency specific materials when necessary/appropriate. The Sample Participation Agreement and Consent for Services is provided as an example for convenience so that Parents as Teachers affiliates do not have to develop a consent form from scratch. If an affiliate uses a different form, please be sure that at a minimum, it explains:

1. The services your program provides.
2. Expectations for participation by the family.
3. Record keeping, data collection activities, and use/sharing of data.

**What if our parent educators are psychologists or medical professionals (e.g. nurses)?**

Parents as Teachers encourages affiliates to include language regarding the limits of the services provided to families through the PAT program in their consent forms. We encourage those affiliates who utilize registered nurses, licensed clinical social workers, or other licensed medical/mental health professionals to keep their agency's mission in mind and to consult with local laws, guidelines, and professional requirements in drafting this section.

**What if our program does not have an outside technical assistance provider (such as a State Office/State Leader, MIECHV Technical Assistance Provider, etc.), do we still need to include a consent for file review in our program's Participation Agreement and Consent for Services?**

Parents as Teachers encourages affiliates to include a place for families to consent for file review regardless of whether or not the affiliate is actively receiving technical assistance from an outside organization or agency. Every five years, all affiliates go through the Quality Endorsement and Improvement process which includes file reviews conducted by Parents as Teachers national office staff. By including a place for all families to consent for file reviews, programs will know that they are prepared for the Quality Endorsement and Improvement process or any other potential file reviews conducted by funders or other outside program personnel.