Parents as Teachers teams with Washington University to study obesity among young mothers

University receives a $3.3 million grant for research

St. Louis, MO – Sept. 4, 2018 – Parents as Teachers (PAT), an internationally-recognized leader in the home visiting field, has teamed with Washington University in St. Louis to conduct a controlled trial to test alternative methods to reverse the trend of excessive weight gain among young mothers nationwide, particularly those in underserved communities.

In response to the obesity epidemic that has plagued countless Americans, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has granted Washington University $3.3 million to conduct the study. For two decades, PAT and Washington University have partnered on similar projects.

The NIH grant allows the university to scale the intervention to 24 PAT home visiting sites across the United States, and evaluate dissemination and implementation. It also will let researchers continue studying ways to prevent weight gain and chronic disease among mothers 19 - 35 years of age.

Earlier this year, findings released from the pilot project called “Healthy Eating and Active Living Taught at Home (HEALTH), a lifestyle modification intervention trial, were found to prevent weight gain, promote sustained weight loss and reduce waist circumference.

Constance Gully, president and chief executive officer at Parents as Teachers National Center (PATNC), said the obesity research project builds on PAT’s longstanding commitment to improving health outcomes.

“Home visiting is a family support, parent education, intervention, and prevention program that has been proven to improve the well-being, health and school readiness outcomes of children and families,” Gully said. “The disproportionate and national prevalence of obesity among today’s young mothers have significant implications for service delivery. We are excited to explore what this study means for moms in our programs throughout the United States.”
Rachel Tabak, research associate professor at Washington University, and Debra Haire-Joshu, Joyce Wood Professor at the university’s Brown School, are co-investigators of the study who are working with PAT to examine prevention and intervention measures. Both researchers are part of the Prevention Research Center, Center for Diabetes Translation Research and Envolve Center for Health Behavior Change. Each works on obesity prevention and community-based physical activity and nutrition strategies.

“The findings from this new study will have significant potential to help reverse the trend of excessive weight gain among young adult women, a critical priority target in battling the epidemics of obesity and chronic disease, by reaching women with an evidence-based home visiting intervention nationwide,” Tabak said.

Allison Kemner, PATNC’s vice president of Research and Quality, said, “much discussion is underway about ‘precision home visiting’ that focuses on the components of a curriculum or model that determines what interventions are most effective for different groups, and what works for whom and in what context to achieve specific outcomes. This project does that for moms suffering from obesity.”

**About Parents as Teachers**
Parents as Teachers (PAT) builds strong communities, thriving families, and children that are healthy, safe and ready to learn by matching parents and caregivers with trained professionals who make regular personal home visits during a child’s earliest years in life, from pregnancy through kindergarten. The internationally-recognized evidence-based home visiting model is backed by 35 years of research-proven outcomes for children and families. PAT currently serves nearly 200,000 families in all 50 U.S. states, 115 Tribal organizations, six other countries, and one U.S. territory. Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc., is a non-profit organization headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri.

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