Parents as Teachers receives $221,179 grant to expand home visiting using a hybrid on-ground, virtual videoconferencing approach

Texas-based Episcopal Health Foundation awards $3.5 million to organizations to promote early childhood brain development

ST. LOUIS, MO – Feb. 10, 2020 -- St. Louis-based Parents as Teachers (PAT), a leader in the home visiting field, has received a $221,179 grant from Houston, Texas-based Episcopal Health Foundation (EHF) to launch and study a hybrid on-ground and virtual interactive videoconferencing approach to home visiting, a first of its kind in the nation.

“We are most thankful to EHF for their financial support around the work we are doing,” said Constance Gully, PAT’s president and chief executive officer. “The early childhood development projects supported by them are putting brain science to work by providing tools and trustworthy information through parent support groups, training programs, models at pediatric clinics, and home-visiting programs.”

Non-profit PAT has the most highly replicated early childhood evidence-based home-visiting model. It plans to use the funds to evaluate a blended on-ground and virtual approach to deliver one of the four components of its model - home visiting. The other three parts are group connections, screening, and resourcing.

Virtual home visiting makes it possible to maintain a high frequency of service to families who have tight schedules or who might be medically fragile, transient, or live in rural communities. The grant is part of EHF’s $3.5 million investment in Texas organizations that are implementing timely, research-based practices for early childhood brain development in children during pregnancy and the first three years of their lives.

PAT will work through six affiliates in Central and East Texas that are currently implementing the on-ground PAT model. In 2020, they will start embedding interactive videoconferencing home visits into their service delivery plan for families throughout the EHF service area.

The funding lets PAT incorporate research and practices associated with new technologies into the delivery system of its home visiting model, and help demonstrate the potential of Virtual Parent Education (VPE) for connecting underserved families to parenting support, community resources, and each other.
Angela Rau, PAT’s virtual parenting education specialist, said PAT is piloting the hybrid approach to complement its traditional methods by combining virtual home visits with on-ground services.

“We are exploring this virtual approach based on our families’ desires for technological solutions to meet their parenting needs,” Rau said. “This hybrid approach can increase efficiency by cutting down the need for home visitors to physically go to homes.”

PAT’s home visiting model requires that home visitors or “parent educators” see families twice a month. When parents have a sick child, or there is inclement weather, those factors can interfere with the parent educators’ ability to meet program requirements.

“We’re looking to see if virtual home visiting can be one solution to maintaining the frequency and service routine,” Rau said. “Whenever on-ground service delivery is not possible, the virtual component will be offered and evaluated to find out what works best for the families.”

The EHF funding covers training, technology, implementation support, and evaluation to allow PAT to learn what additional support is needed and the impact the hybrid approach has on family outcomes.

EHF President and CEO Elena Marks said the Foundation’s effort is based on brain science showing that a child’s first three years offer a once-in-a-lifetime chance to build a strong brain, develop a curious and creative mind, and decrease the chance of developing serious illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and depression later in life.

“Those first three years are the critical window for every child, and every parent can benefit from extra help,” Marks said, adding, “We want to create healthier communities for generations to come.”

The EHF grant complements the work PAT has been doing with the University of Southern California’s (USC) Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work and Telehealth Clinic. For three years, PAT has partnered with the university to establish the Parents as Teachers @ USC Telehealth project. It’s a virtual home visiting initiative that delivers some of PAT’s home visiting model to families with children prenatal through age three entirely through videoconferencing technology on the Internet.

**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.

**About Episcopal Health Foundation**
By providing millions of dollars in grants, working with congregations and community partners, and providing important research, the Episcopal Health Foundation (EHF) supports solutions that address the underlying causes of poor health in Texas. With more than $1.2 billion in estimated assets, the Foundation is based in Houston, operates as a supporting organization of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, and works across 57 Texas counties. #HealthNotJustHealthcare.

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