



Family Support

VOICES OF

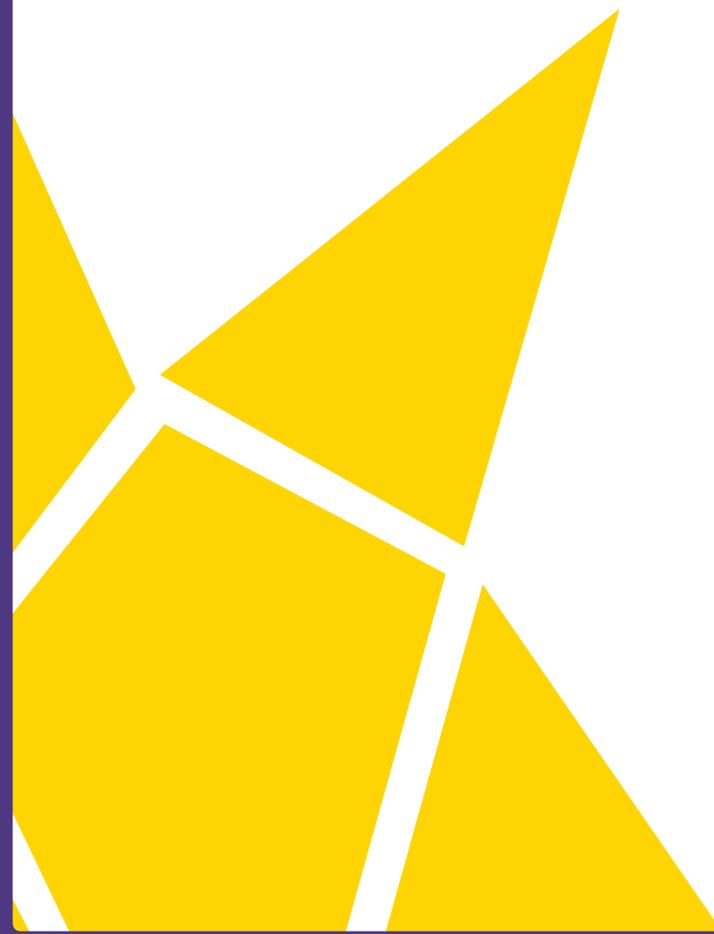
SUCCESS

Nurturing Children

Strengthening Families

Building Community

Testimony from the parents of
Allegheny County Family Support



We, the parent leaders of Allegheny County Family Support, offer this booklet as a testimony of how being involved in **Family Support has changed our lives**. Many of us have been helped so much that we feel a deep need to pass it on.

This booklet is our way of getting the word out about Family Support and letting you know what our centers are all about. We think that, if you get to know Family Support, you'll see that our centers are **the foundation of our children's success**.

We hope you will take the time to read our stories. We invite you to **become a champion**, and work with us to ensure that Family Support Centers continue to **serve our communities** for generations to come.

 *Allegheny County Family Support
Parent Leaders*

What is Family Support?

Allegheny County Family Support nurtures children, strengthens families, and builds communities through a network of 25 neighborhood-based centers. We are committed to a strengths-based approach that recognizes parents as their child's first, and most important, teacher. We empower parents to advocate for their children, and to achieve their own educational and financial goals. Our programs are governed and designed by participants, based on relationships, respectful of different cultures, enhanced through evaluation, and completely voluntary.

 *Family Support nurtures children, strengthens families, and builds community...*

For more than 20 years, Family Support Centers have helped Allegheny County's children achieve brighter futures. Annually, close to 6000 children and their families are enrolled in one of 25 centers located across the county.

Centers provide services in 4 key areas:

- Health and Well-being
- Positive Parenting and Child Development (including School Readiness)
- Keeping Children Safe at Home / Family Preservation
- Economic Self-Sufficiency

Our goal is to ensure that families have easy access to a seamless and comprehensive network of services.

 *Family Support is evidence-based...*

Family Support uses *Parents as Teachers* – an evidence-based home visiting program recognized by the federal government. Parents enrolled in Family Support report an increased ability to meet their family's basic needs, improved parenting skills, and greater confidence advocating for their children.

 *Family Support is a pathway to positive outcomes for children and families...*

Family Support Centers build *protective factors* that are proven to prevent child abuse and promote positive outcomes:

Family Functioning and Resiliency
Adaptive skills and strategies to persevere in the face of difficulty

Social Supports
Informal supports from family and friends

Concrete Supports
Access to tangible goods and services in times of need

Child Development and Parenting
Understanding how children grow and using positive parenting techniques

Nurturing and Attachment
Early experiences of being cared for and bonding with a loving parent



It made me think, reach, and make positive changes.



Hill District Center for Nurturing Families

I came to Pittsburgh as a young single woman and mother with a newborn child. I had no family or support system. Many times I became nervous and discouraged, feeling overwhelmed. It wasn't easy trying to find housing, childcare and a job all alone. I was recommended to the Hill District Center for Nurturing Families. From the very first home visit, I immediately knew what it meant to be a part of the Family Support system. I was supported and not judged. Now, almost two years later, I am a confident, strong, and stable woman. Through Family Support, I found housing, gained employment, and built positive parenting skills. I'm also proud to say, I am now Vice President of all the centers' parent[s]. I'm a successful woman with two jobs now and raising my daughter on my own.

– Lyanna

Wilkinsburg Family Support Center

Prevention programs do not sit well with some people because the rewards are way down the road somewhere. Well, my kids are down that road. They are safe, productive adults because they were involved in a Family Support Center with an after-school program. And there are thousands of families like me all across the county.

– Elaine

Lincoln Park Family Center

Lincoln Park Family Center changes lives and builds a stronger and better community. Ask me how I know? Lincoln Park changed mine.

– Natausha

McKeesport Family Center

They come into my home. They open their center for us to go there [for] my child to have time with other kids to socialize. I am an older mom. My husband works. We have one income. There is no way we could afford the speech therapy that's provided through this program. These delays are catchable with the correct people who are in there to connect you with the early intervention services and make the difference young. It made a huge difference in my family. [And] I'm one of many.

– Tracey N.



“I was encouraged to be involved to help shape the program.”

Wilkinsburg Family Support Center

I grew up participating in a Family Support center and after school program. I now attend college and I work. I know some youth who became struggling teen moms, others who ended up in jail, and still some did not get to reach my age. Youth need something to do, a place to be after school, a sense of community like there is in the Family Support center.

– Ciana

Steel Valley Family Center

I have been enrolled at the Center since my youngest son was three years old. He was born addicted to drugs and CYF placed him with me when he was one and a half months old. He received early intervention services and they referred me to the Steel Valley Family Center right after he turned three. He attended toddler groups and the Family Center helped me with parenting classes and transportation. They also helped me to grow as a person. I never wanted to ask for help and they showed me it was okay to get some help. The therapist at the Family Center helped me get involved with other programs. They made me feel that I could handle everything. I've become a stronger person at the Family Center, more self-sufficient. I am a parent ambassador and I volunteer in my community. I work to help others. I tell other parents to enroll and get the help they need with their children.

– Georgiana

Clairton Family Center

According to statistics, my daughter is at risk for trauma, addictions, rage, criminality, school behavior, and performance problems as well as social and institutionalized stigmas and shame. I'm here to [say] thank you. Thank you, Family Support, for your weekly parent-child activities... because there my daughter learned how to talk and socialize with other children. Thank you for your bulletin board where I was able to find a job and get off of cash assistance. Thank you, Family Support, for your monthly newsletter that reminded me to make sure my daughter's immunizations were up to date and to make sure she was enrolled in kindergarten on time. Thank you, Family Support, for your two, three, four, sometimes five home visits a month... and [for] bringing your books. My daughter loves to read. Her kindergarten teacher had her teaching other kids their sight words, and now in first grade out of 25 students she is one of the top five readers in her class. Thank you for bringing your puzzles and your blocks because she already has the love for math. She has an A in math and has received an advanced marking in all related mathematical areas. Thank you, Family Support, for your strong educational foundation that you have made in my family's life. You can expect great things from [my daughter].

– Tiffany



Putting her in the Head Start program at the center was the right move because she has continued to grow, learn, and become more independent.





*I found housing, employment
and built positive parenting skills.*



Steel Valley Family Center

The Family Center encouraged me to grow and become more independent. [The Center] helped me to acquire my GED, become a United States citizen and get my job. In 2001, I went on maternity leave and my son was born. I received home visits. On one of my visits, my family specialist noticed [something that my son was doing with his fingers]. She expressed some concern. She asked me if I wanted her to refer him to an early intervention program. I agreed and we enrolled in the program. I expressed to my Family Development Specialist that I was concerned about the way [my son] was talking. She suggested that I call the pediatrician to make an appointment and she will go with me. Two months later [my son] was diagnosed with leukemia. My family specialist went with me and provided support. The center provided transportation so my son could receive his chemotherapy. They stayed with me throughout his entire treatment. [Today, he] is doing fine and is finally in remission. [My Center also] helped me to get [my] job with resume preparation and interview practice. Now, I'm able to provide the kind of help and support I received to families in similar situations. I was a non-English speaking immigrant from Honduras 20 years ago. Thanks to the Steel Valley Family Center I am now proud to say that I have become a productive citizen of the United States.

– Martha

Providence Family Support Center

Over the last three or four years, I've actually grown closer to my family. I've managed to maintain [abstinence] from alcohol, and a lot of it is due to these programs – like Allegheny Family Support and Allegheny Family Network. If it wasn't for these programs, my family would not even be together today.

I'm at the point now in my life where I'm actually trying to start getting back with the community. I'm now an ambassador with the Family Support Network. I'm also working with the Fathers Involved Now program, [which] is trying to get more fathers more involved in their children's lives, because I run around the school with my own two kids and see them on a daily basis.

– Russ

East Hills Family Support Center

You've looked out for us when we couldn't see the forest for trees, when we thought we were broken, and you were always there to show us that we were just waiting for the positive change to come.

– Yolanda



With the centers involved in my life, I became a better father, a better husband and a better grandfather.



Sto Rox Family Center

I'm newly single, four children, one with a disability. If it had not been for the Center almost eight years ago I know I wouldn't have any of my children.

– Christine

Steel Valley Family Center

The therapist at the Family Center helped me get involved with other programs. They made me feel that I could handle everything. I've become a stronger person at the Family Center, more self-sufficient. I am a parent ambassador and I volunteer in my community. I work to help others. I tell other parents to enroll and get the help they need with their children.

– Georgiana

East Allegheny Family Support Center

My Center has helped me in so many ways. My son, born 13 weeks premature, is a child with disabilities. My Family Center has helped me find referrals to people who could help my son and have even provided transportation to the many appointments where buses just don't run. I believe we can thrive as long as my son has the services that he needs.

– Cybonne

Latino Family Center

The family center has become a communication bridge between us and the school: many times I have asked [my Family Development Specialist] to help me understand what the school is asking for, or if the teachers send me a note, she helps me to understand the issues my child is having. She also helps when service offices (such as WIC, Medicaid, and doctors) ask for documents or requirements, or when I have trouble understanding a prescription.

– Maria

Providence Family Support Center

When I found out what Family Support was, I called and asked questions and they answered and they said it's not just for kids – it's for adults, too. They have classes for adults. So I was wondering if we had to pay. They said no, it's free, and I said are you sure? So they asked, would you like to have one of our Family Development Specialists call you? I said yes, thanks. They called me back, we set up appointments, and when they came two days later, I signed up. We did activities, games, and classes for children and adults. I have been with Providence for almost a year and I love it. My little one loves when Carol, our Family Development Specialist, comes to our home. We love Family Fun Night and going to classes because we get to meet new friends. The people at the center are friendly and nice and I love being there.

Trish

“I've become a stronger person...”



Braddock Family Care Connection

I cannot say enough for how Family Support and the [developmental] screening experience have supported me and my family. This is a hard journey and my Family Support experience reaffirms that I am not the only parent that has a child with this kind of issue. [I have been] inspired to use what I've learned to pass along to others. There are wonderful tools and people out there that can help you.

-Don

Lincoln Park Family Center

I am a single working mom and I'm blessed and proud to belong to the LPFC! The center services benefit my family in so many ways. They provide a safe environment, educational services for parents and children, and additional services such as an afterschool program, summer camp, a library, head start classrooms, a free field trip, and a food bank that provides food to low-income residents free of charge.

I am the President of the Family Center Parent Council and I volunteer several of my services to the center. This is my way of giving thanks and showing appreciation for all the services and activities my children and I receive free of charge. This community center is desperately needed in our area and other areas. There is always something to do and I plan to continue to patronize the center until the time comes for my family to move forward to allow another family to reap the same benefits.

-Tonya



If it wasn't for these programs my family would not even be together today...





"I honestly believe that coming here has saved my life."



Turtle Creek Family Care Connection

I was looking for a preschool for my son, but I didn't have money to pay for one. A staff person at the Lawrenceville Family Care Connection told me about the Kindergarten Readiness Program at Turtle Creek Family Care Connection. When we first started with the center, I had postpartum depression. One of the Family Development Specialists helped me a lot. She did not ask if I wanted to come to the center. She told me what time to be ready and picked me up for the programs. She made me get out of the house to the program and to doctor appointments. My life would be much different if I hadn't made that phone call. I honestly believe that coming here has saved my life.

Both of my children's kindergarten teachers were unbelievably impressed and thought that they had a wonderful preschool. Neither went to preschool, just the kindergarten readiness program. They were further ahead than kids who went to preschool.

My husband comes to the fatherhood program and enjoys it. I volunteer at the center because it gives me something to do. The people are good and I enjoy working with kids too. Family Support brings families together and – in this day – that's rare. At the center, families can become very close and there are activities for us to do together.

– Alissa





Family Support brings families together and – in this day – that’s rare.



McKeesport Family Center

I’m a first time parent. About a year and a half ago, [my Family Development Specialist] noticed that [my son’s] speech was delayed. I thought, oh, he’ll pick it up. But he didn’t. She asked that he be tested. They tested him and he is now receiving services. He’s having speech therapy. He has mastered his goal in his speech delay and is now working on his articulation. Back when I was a child, this wasn’t available. I struggled my whole school career not knowing what was wrong with me. And if this had been available for me, how much further would I have gone? My son, my goal for him is that by the time he reaches kindergarten, he’ll have no delays in his speech, that the kindergarten teacher will say delay, what delay? His articulation is perfect. That’s my goal and that is obtainable because of the Family Center.

– Tracey N.

Hilltop Family Care Connection

The Family Support Center has been a foundation for me and my children. It has been a salvation. We have encountered tough times. The staff has been there through all of our highs and low points in life. They were there for my children and me when my mother passed away. They were there when my two youngest children’s father became incarcerated.

– Amanda

Lincoln Park Family Center

Without the center, I don't know where I would be. They care, so we care.

– Tonya

Sto Rox Family Center

With the centers involved in my life, I became a better father, a better husband, and a better grandfather. I became a better person. I became a good leader thanks to my family center. When my wife enrolled our family at the Family Center 17 years ago, I didn't realize that she was planting the seed for a better future for our sons and now our grandchildren.

– Ivan

East Allegheny Family Support Center

Our Family Center serves as a liaison between us and our county. The resources at the Center combined with the county program are unlike most programs available. Working families like mine can benefit from the use of programs like fatherhood programs, parent council, play group, family and personal counseling, home visits for children with disabilities, and dental screening. [Family Centers] serve fundamental needs in on our already underserved communities.

– Cybonne



The family center has become a communication bridge between us and the school.





 *Our center inspires us to set goals and to achieve them.*



East Liberty Family Support Center

We came to the East Liberty Family Support center when my son was four years old. We were the first family to enroll. When I first joined Family Support, I was encouraged to be involved to help shape the program. I have accomplished so much in Family Support. I was first Vice-President and quickly moved to President. Our first fundraiser was a waste, raising only \$6.39, but I was determined to raise \$2,000.00 before my term as president ended. I met my goal with the final fundraiser in my term, which was our Mother's Day Dinner. Family Support has taught me to set goals and to go for it. I have grown up right alongside my son in Family Support.

We are still very active [at the center]: I assist in the childcare program, supervising many of the children. Whenever my Family Development Specialist or the staff asks me for help, I make myself available. I drop whatever I am doing to help. Why? It is simple: when I need them they are ALWAYS there for me. They never let me down.

– Tracey



Braddock Family Care Connection

I am a great-grandmother helping to raise my grandchildren. Our center inspires [us] to set goals and to achieve them. Once this has been done, they encourage us to step up to the next level. My center encourages me to step outside my comfort zone and become involved with other organizations in my community. Now I am involved as a parent leader, as a Community Representative, and as a member of Community Voices, Communities That Cares, Community Network Tri-Boro, and Salvation Army; this all because of my Family Care Connection Center. It made me think, reach, and make positive changes.

– Natalie

East Hills Family Support Center

Family Support is an excellent program for helping families meet their goals and become better as a family. Family Support is more than just support for families: it is the total experience that helped us become better in our relationships with others. There is plenty of love and concern shared. It has been a true blessing to have the program available to us. We would hope that there would be more given to this program because it really is a huge part of our success as a family over the last 2½ years.

– Eliska

Sto Rox Family Center

[My family has] been involved with the center for five years. When our youngest started Head Start, we received help to prepare her for kindergarten. She has since excelled in school and is now in second grade in the gifted program. Putting her in the Head Start program at the center was the right move because she has continued to grow, learn, and become more independent in many ways.

– Anita

Duquesne Family Support Center

Staff is there for moral support and for child and parent activities and to help the children with their development from the time they are born to the time they go to kindergarten.

– Joann



“When the center did not provide a specific service, they referred me to someone who could.”



I never wanted to ask for help and they showed me it was okay to get some help.



Rankin Family Care Connection

I have four children who range from 4 to 17 years old. I participated in many different programs [at my center]. The visiting nurse taught me CPR for children since I have a child with special needs. Raising Readers helped me engage my kids' interest in books. Fire prevention helped us make a safe exit plan in case of a fire. At baby showers in the center we learned to bathe, feed, and play with babies. The toddlers club helps us learn to play with our toddlers. Pre-kindergarten helped my child transition to school. The child development assessments were important, too. I use the information for doctor visits. When the center did not provide a specific service, they referred me to someone who could. I made connections with Alliances for Infants, Pre-K Counts and the D.A.R.T. program. I now recommend the center to all my friends and neighbors in the community.

– Anonymous

Sto Rox Family Center

My son was born with a cleft palate. He is now two years old. He speaks with a delay, but because of [my Family Development Specialist], I was able to be placed with people to help him. He's starting to thrive. He's becoming his own little person. I don't know what I would have done if I didn't have the backing of my center. They give me courage. They have made me strong. I'm confident and I know I am a wonderful mother.

– Christine

Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center

[The Homewood-Brushton Family Support Center] brought us back to wanting to start over with our lives. They gave us so much support with housing, food, group sessions, tips for us for healthy living, and ways for me to gain back control of my life. After the fire we had lost everything. They helped us build our lives back together.

– Lawanda

Hilltop Family Care Connection

I really like coming to the center because my daughter is an only child so I was looking for a place for her to play, meet, and be around other children. We started coming to playgroup, then Raising Readers, which was great because we received books. My daughter loves books. Now she is coming to the center for school that she loves and she is learning a lot. My daughter has met lots of great friends and the staff is great.

– Amy



I was supported and not judged.



The Family Support Network

Allegheny County Family Support is **families and children** partnering with **25 Centers**, hosted by **10 lead agencies**, with funding and leadership from the Department of Human Services, and the support of a unique and diverse **infrastructure**.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Family Support Policy Board
Parent leaders, collaborators, and funders

Community Voices
Parents from across Allegheny County

Roundtable
Representatives from the host agencies

Site Director and Family Development Specialist Networking
Staff from across the network

Partnerships for Family Support
Training and technical assistance from the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development

25 CENTERS

Braddock Family Care Connection	Northview Heights Family Support Center
Clairton Family Center	Positive Parenting Program
Duquesne Family Center	Prospect Park Family Center
Duquesne Family Support Center	Providence Family Support Center
East Allegheny Family Center	Rankin Family Care Connection
East Hills Family Support Center	Steel Valley Family Center
East Liberty Family Support Center	Sto-Rox Family Center
Highlands Family Center	Turtle Creek Family Care Connection
Hill District Center for Nurturing Families	Wilkinsburg Family Center
Hilltop Family Care Connection	Wilkinsburg Family Support Center
Homewood Brushton Family Support Center	
Latino Family Center	
Lawrenceville Family Care Connection	
Lincoln Park Family Center	
McKeesport Family Center	

10 LEAD AGENCIES

Allegheny Intermediate Unit	Primary Care Health Services, Inc.
Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC	Providence Connections
Family Resources	South Hills Interfaith Ministry
Focus on Renewal	The Kingsley Association
Homewood-Brushton YMCA	Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh

Nurturing Children

Strengthening Families

Building Community



*“Our children do not vote;
we are their voice.”*

– Elaine Harris-Fulton
Chair, Community Voices

*“Voices of Success” was developed and
written by Family Support parent leaders,
with support from the University of Pittsburgh
Office of Child Development.*



Family Support

ALLEGHENY COUNTY

**To learn more about Family Support or find
a center in your neighborhood, please visit:**

www.allegHENYcounty.us/dhs/fpsupport.aspx

Or contact:

Laura Townsend

Director

Family Support Policy Board
of Allegheny County

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