



Parent Trust: Keeping Children and Families Safe During a Pandemic

Babies can't wait. Families can't wait. Since the pandemic began, we've served so many families who are just a few days from breaking apart: a mom trying to rescue her child from human trafficking, a dad with no idea how to care for his newborn, an incarcerated parent desperate to set up video visitation with their child, panicked parents trying to access food and basic services during this crisis. Over and over, parents tell us,

"You are the only ones answering the phone!"

Parent Trust is a statewide non-profit dedicated to stopping the cycle of passing child abuse, neglect, and other Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) from one generation to the next.

The COVID-19 Pandemic is the biggest challenge we have ever faced. Families are experiencing unprecedented levels of stress due to isolation, grief, illness, school closures and job loss.

All of our programs are operating virtually, and we are expanding our services wherever we can. We are providing the parenting support families tell us they need to get through this pandemic.

COVID-19 isn't stopping us – we offer programs and solutions that help families TODAY.

Parent Trust Programs

- **Our Family Help Line** (1,600 callers/year) is listed on the state's COVID-19 webpage – we've received hundreds of calls from panicked parents. We are the WA State number for Prevent Child Abuse America and receive calls from other states where the line is going unanswered during the pandemic. Police, sheriffs and other first responders across the state refer families to us. We provide immediate parent coaching, training, and referrals specifically to prevent child abuse/neglect and keep families strong.

A mom who fled domestic violence needed a parenting class to regain custody of her daughter and keep her safe. We immediately connected Mom with a Parent Trust Instructor. She completed her class and regularly connects with her Family Help Line Coach. Mom says, "I couldn't have done it without you guys, Parent Trust has been there with me the whole way."

- **Our Technology Access Program** (60 parents/children) provides computers, hotspots, and tech support for new parents with low income – providing critical online access to all of our parenting supports and other vital basic services. This program is helping us serve our state's most vulnerable families.

An expectant mom late in pregnancy, was running out of options -- terrified of the possibility of a pre-term birth. Laid off, alone, she needed support and technology to get online. She said, "I feel like I'm doing everything all by myself!". Our staff delivered a laptop and hot spot immediately and signed her up for our class for new parents.

- **Our Families in Recovery Program (300 families/year) is keeping kids out of foster care.** The pandemic is making recovery from substance addiction so much harder. Our professional Group Facilitators and volunteer Parent Leaders are providing families everything from instruction on using Zoom, to food bank referrals and gift cards for family essentials. We kept serving parents even when treatment centers were closed, and we opened a new statewide online group for anyone parenting in recovery. **Our virtual groups bring recovery, support and community into the living rooms of struggling families.**

A mom missed her Parent Trust program session to give birth and undergo emergency surgery. She was back in our program only a week later. With the support of her group, she was quickly able to move to managing her post-surgery pain with over-the-counter medication and avoid relapse. When another Mom in her group struggled with a relapse, she was there to say, ***"You can do this!"***

- **Our Great Starts Program (3,000 families/year) helps pregnant families navigate fears, anxiety, and isolation during the pandemic.** Our innovative instructors transformed our in-person classes for new parents into a robust virtual experience – providing up to 16 hours of critical researched-based education, community, and connection for new parents.

Virtual classes allow us to bring parents into our classes from hospital rooms and treatment centers, to reach parents who are geographically remote, and to help parents maintain virtual connections after their classes end. *An expectant parent says **"It definitely makes me feel more normal about my fears and concerns since I'm not alone."***

- **Our Developmental Screening Program (150/screenings/year) is working to catch developmental problems early.** Through video-conferencing sessions and using research-based tools, we strengthen parent-child attachment, catch delays early and screen new parents for postpartum depression – which has skyrocketed since the pandemic began.

Parents are coping with everything from working from home and online school to worries about their children's mental health and their own. One parent states, ***"Every parent feels like they are failing during the pandemic. To have someone say to you, it's OK. You are doing this really hard thing – and doing it well...It's invaluable."***

- **Our Family Communications Initiative (30,000 contacts/year) helps parents find the resources and support they need TODAY.** Our website provides an updated *COVID-19 Resource List*, dozens of practical articles on parenting and a statewide database of critical parenting resources ranging from children's mental health to information on car seats. We provide resources via website, email, text, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook.

Many parents are more comfortable texting or looking for resources online. Our Coronavirus Resource List helps families find everything from online therapeutic preschool to emergency food aid. *So many parents say: **"You actually have useful information on your website."***

- **Our Conscious Fathering Program (800 fathers/year)** covers child development, infant care, sleep safety, stress management, warning signs of postpartum depression and shaken baby syndrome prevention. All of our Conscious Fathering classes are now virtual, and we plan to continue to offer a combination of online and in-person classes after the pandemic per requests from expectant fathers. Dads love our online programming, and specifically asked for increased time and support in navigating all that COVID-19 means for their new families.

Fathers often go overlooked. Our instructors go the extra mile to create a safe class and community for new dads – where they can talk about everything from changing diapers to how to handle the rush of intense feelings when their baby won't stop crying. One dad recently said, ***“I had an experience with a pretty rough family growing up... It was hard. I appreciated talking after the class a little. I feel more confident now that I will not repeat the mistakes of my father.”***

- **Our Stress Management and Relaxation Training (SMART) Program (500 students/year) is teaching teens, children, and parents how to manage stress.** Our in-school classes are offered online in an interactive format in 3 Puget Sound school districts. We created a special curriculum related to the stresses caused by the pandemic. Our SMART instructors also developed a series of free stress management videos, available on our website and our YouTube channel, and have demonstrated stress management exercises live on our Facebook page.

We teach children and families how to express and manage worry. After our SMART class, one 3rd grader told his teacher, ***“My worries are so much smaller now!”***

Families need help before they reach a crisis point. Before the damage is done. The pandemic has put so many more kids at risk of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The 10 ACEs include sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect, emotional neglect, violence in the home, parent with a mental illness, parent incarcerated, parent addicted to drugs/alcohol, and parental abandonment.

ACEs are directly associated with adult homelessness, drug/alcohol addiction, mental illness, serious chronic medical conditions, and early death.

ACE prevention can change the world – and spare so many children from suffering.

Investing in ACE Prevention today will keep the pandemic from hurting our most vulnerable families for decades to come.

