

# Imprints Cares and Pediatric Parenting Connections: Embedding Home Visiting in Pediatric Practices

## Background

Approximately 16% of Parents as Teachers affiliates operate within a healthcare setting.<sup>1</sup> This case study will highlight one organization that has embedded Parents as Teachers services in pediatric care facilities. Many other organizations do similar work, and the following affiliate has been highlighted to increase awareness of the positive outcomes associated with the initiative, encourage replication across additional sites and communities, and promote sustainability and continued funding of the practice.

## Parents as Teachers

Parents as Teachers is an evidenced-based home visiting model offering services for families from prenatal through kindergarten to support childhood development and promote positive parenting practices. Parents as Teachers achieves seven model goals demonstrated by decades of evidence:

- Increase parent knowledge of early childhood development and improve positive parenting practices
- Provide early detection of developmental delays and connection to service
- Improve parent, child, and family health and well-being
- Prevent child abuse and neglect
- Increase children's school readiness and success
- Improve family economic well-being
- Strengthen community capacity and connectedness



The Parents as Teachers model is supported by more than 40 years of independent research. A global network of affiliates and trained parent educators deliver the model through four components: Personal Visits, Group Connections, Resource Connections, and Child and Caregiver Screening.

## **Imprints Cares**

Imprints Cares, located in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, was founded in 1969 with a mission to nurture children for lifelong success by creating safe and stimulating home environments, preparing children for school, and supporting caregivers as their child's first and best teacher. Imprints Cares is the only education nonprofit in Forsyth County that serves families and children from prenatal into middle school, and it does so by addressing structural barriers, embracing cultural diversity, and creating safe and inclusive environments where children can learn, grow, and thrive to their fullest potential. Imprints Cares became a Parents as Teachers affiliate in 1996 and continues to build a strong reputation in the community for supporting and connecting with families.

*“One of the great advantages of Imprints Cares is that they're family based. They don't just work with the child or parent, but they work with the whole family, which I think is really important because a lot of it is about parenting skills and sometimes you need to parent each child a little differently. I think they do a good job of empowering parents and using a whole family structure.” – Dr. Montez, General Academic Pediatrician at Wake Forest University School of Medicine*

## **Pediatric Parenting Connections**

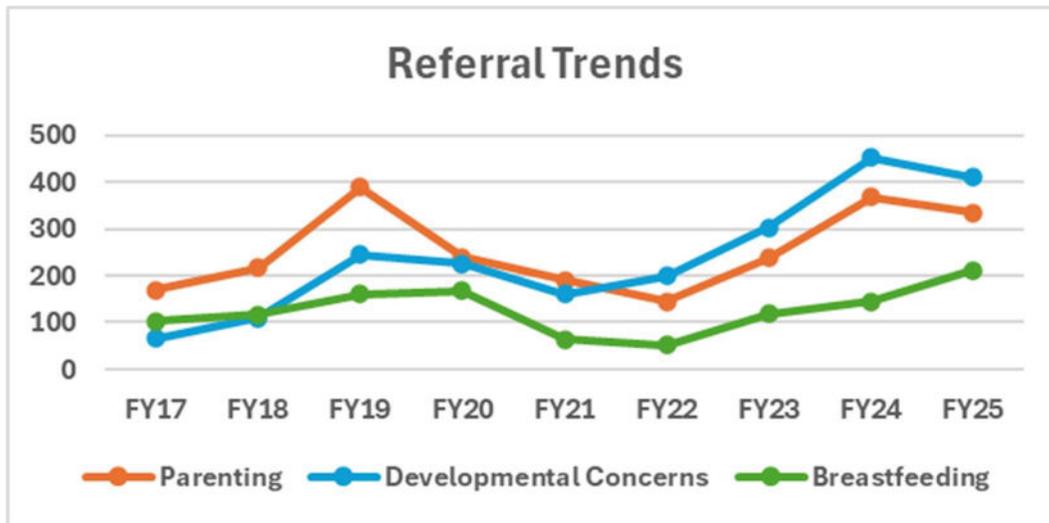
Pediatric Parenting Connections (PPC) started in 2010 as a pilot program through Imprints Cares designed to address social determinants influencing the health and well-being of children and families in Forsyth County. The then-Chair of the Pediatrics Department at the Downtown Health Plaza, recognizing Imprints Cares' presence in the community and specifically their classes with expectant parents, asked the organization to expand its role providing basic health education to caregivers. Imprints Cares responded by implementing PPC in a very limited capacity in two Atrium Health pediatric practices, the Downtown Health Plaza and Winston East Pediatrics, with minimal funding from Northwest Community Care Network. They received referrals from pediatricians serving families with children 0 to 5 years old and later received additional funding from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust to continue to scale the program and reach more families.

*“Because we are getting the referrals from pediatricians, we are not dependent on recruiting in ways that are less effective. We know we are getting the families that really need the support... it is somebody else saying ‘Hey, talk to these people! They can really help you.’ I think it has really strengthened our Parents as Teachers program to have PPC as part of what we do.”*

*– Laurie, Director of Parents as Teachers at Imprints Cares*



PPC has since developed into a well-recognized and -supported co-located evidence-based pediatric model partnering with Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist and Novant Health Systems to meet families where they are and integrate positive parenting practices, intensive home visitation, mental and behavioral health resources, and developmental support services. The most common reasons for referrals to PPC include breastfeeding support, parenting concerns, developmental delays, and community resource connections.<sup>2</sup> The PPC model streamlines referrals to connect families to necessary resources, integrates easily into resident and non-resident medical practices, reduces duplication in services, provides warm hand-offs to ensure families do not get lost in the system, and addresses social drivers of health outcomes. PCC services typically consist of one or two contacts, and families needing more support are connected to the Imprints Cares Parents as Teachers program.



**Figure 1. Referral Trends:** The data indicate that before the COVID-19 pandemic (2020), the primary reason for referrals to PPC was parenting concerns. However, after the pandemic, concerns shifted to child development, and this trend has continued since.

PPC offers a holistic and preventative approach to family support. The program bridges the gap between clinical and social services by addressing the determinants of health related to parenting, child development, and overall family well-being. The co-location of this program fosters cross-system collaboration uplifting its partners, families, and community, and its design allows families to receive a continuum of services promoting their optimal outcomes. A family on the waitlist for Parents as Teachers services can still receive support through PPC’s *What You Do Matters* (WYDM) class. WYDM supports young caregivers with the education and resources they need to parent – immediately and at no cost. WYDM is offered to four cohorts of young mothers each year, with two cohorts in English and two in Spanish and 10-15 families in each cohort. Every cohort receives six virtual sessions and one in-person infant CPR class, along with toys and books for caregivers to use in interacting with their infants.

WYDM has been an integral component of Imprints Cares/PPC. For instance, one young mother who was on the waitlist for Parents as Teachers services after delivering a healthy baby struggled with breastfeeding and did not know how to prepare formula to feed her three-day-old infant. She was connected to WYDM where she received immediate support from staff at Imprints Cares and learned new strategies for keeping her newborn healthy and fed.



## **Connecting Families to Needed Services**

Imprints Cares/PPC recognizes the value of establishing partnerships with other community organizations to provide the most effective care and necessary resources for families in Forsyth County. For instance, noticing that many families and young children were struggling with mental health issues, the program partnered with Crossnore Communities for Children, a local organization that predominantly serves foster care children but also offers mental health support therapy to community members. One of the most important functions of PPC is screening children for developmental delays and connecting them to local early intervention support when needed.

Imprints Cares/PPC partners with several other local organizations to provide families with the resources they need: food banks, diaper banks, safe sleep training and materials, interpretation and language services, and transportation. They recognize the importance of building relationships with other nonprofits in the community and provide referrals to public entities such as WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) offices and Care Management for At-Risk Children (CMARC) as needed. Additionally, Imprints Cares has partnered with local schools to help families complete registration forms, in both English and Spanish, for preschool and kindergarten enrollment.

*“Nutrition, sleep routines ... determines what our service is going to be, but we always say it is parenting. Parenting support is what we do, and that includes mental health, anything and everything... We become experts in what is available in the community so we are able to connect families to resources and early intervention for child development.” – Maria, Director of Pediatric Parenting Connections*

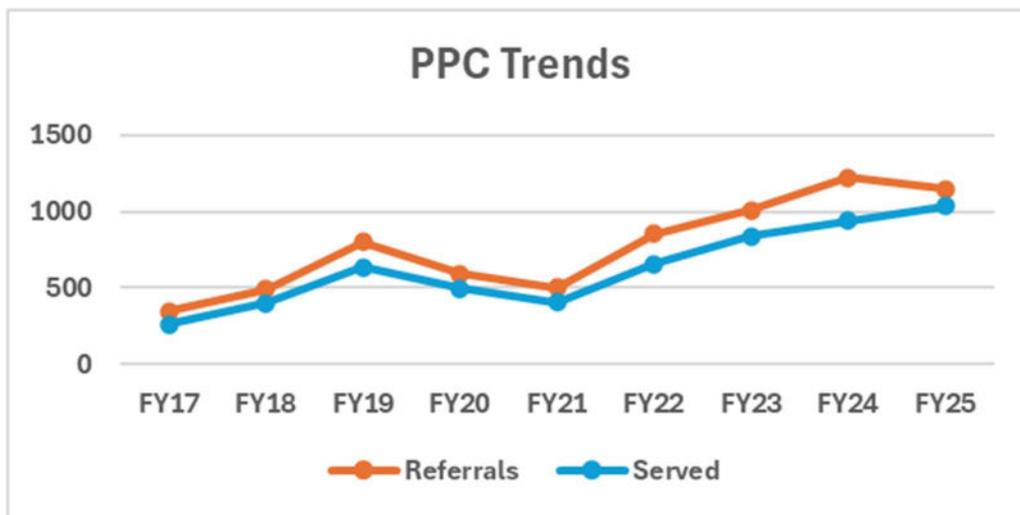
# The Pediatric Parenting Connections Team

## Family Educators

Family educators at Imprints Cares receive certification in Parents as Teachers Foundational I and II trainings and several others that support their work, such as trauma-informed care and breastfeeding support. This professional development is critical in equipping family educators to effectively and sensitively address a family’s emotional, physical, and environmental needs.

*“I try to talk to them and get to know them a little bit. I build a personal connection with the family, like, ‘Oh, I have a son the same age, how sweet.’ I try to listen to them and get to know them and try to see what their concerns are.” – Vanessa, Family Educator at Imprints Cares*

The family educators are embedded within the pediatric clinic to allow for quick referrals and warm handoffs from medical staff, two critical factors in establishing trust and building relationships with families. As members of the clinical team, they are well-recognized and valued for their ability to connect with families, provide immediate support, and increase family engagement in services. A family is significantly more likely to follow through with recommended steps, such as completing referrals, accessing developmental services, or enrolling in prenatal programs, once a connection with a family educator has been made. In the last year, Imprints Cares was able to close the referral loop for more than two-thirds of the families referred to the organization.



**Figure 2. PPC Trends:** Referrals to PPC have tripled over the last nine years. PPC serves 75% or more of the families referred to services.

*“I think [PPC] is a very welcome program by the families, because as soon as you tell them ‘Hey, listen. There is this person here who can do a more in-depth evaluation, or they can talk to you more, or they may have more resources that they can share with you,’ the families are very excited about that.” – Dr. Mahajan, General Pediatrician at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist*



## ***Pediatricians, Attendings, and Residents***

Clinical staff may not have the time to thoroughly address all of a family’s concerns during a well-child visit, but they still want to ensure families receive the support, resources, and care they need to flourish. Family educators and clinical staff work side-by-side to support families, and they see one another as vital parts of supporting a family and child’s health and wellbeing. Family educators are on-site twice a week, and they are always available to connect through online messaging. Once a connection is made, the family educators can update the referring provider on a family’s progress through an online messaging system (Epic Inbasket).

*“[Family educators] are part of our team. We don’t see them as separate from our team... they speak the same language as our family, and that is probably the most important thing.” – Dr. Miller-Fitzwater, General Academic Pediatrician at Wake Forest University School of Medicine*

The PPC medical team, comprised of pediatricians, attendings, and residents, recognizes the value not only of family educators but of the program as a whole. Families may be referred to PPC for behavior concerns (sleep, discipline), lactation and breastfeeding help, nutrition advice, toilet training, developmental delays, or other support. Medical staff believe that without access to PPC, they would see a significant increase in behavioral problems and significant delays in identifying and treating developmental delays. They believe that programs like PPC should be immersed in other pediatric practices because behavior, sleep, nutrition, and development form crucial parts of well-child care that medical staff do not have time to discuss with families given the other demands of their role and practice.

*“If our resident clinic suddenly did not have PPC, there would be a huge gap in care left within our community of patients.” – Dr. Collinsworth, Chief Resident at Wake Forest University School of Medicine*

## **The Caregiver and Family Experience**

Families referred to PPC report many benefits of the program. One mother with three children was first referred to PPC when her eldest child experienced a speech delay. The child was connected with early intervention, and the family enrolled in Parents as Teachers. The family received tangible resources like books and diapers, the mother reported increased parenting knowledge and confidence, the children grew in kindergarten readiness, and the eldest child connected to a speech specialist.

*“[The PPC program is] very helpful. They have really good resources. And really, just when you need help, they’re there for you... I’m forever grateful... [my son is] doing way better now, and he actually graduated from the [speech] program.”*  
– Mitzi, Mother

Additionally, a Spanish-speaking family was referred to PPC and connected to Parents as Teachers as first-time parents to receive guidance on their infant’s development, and the mother reported receiving developmental screenings, breastfeeding consultation, healthcare and mental health referrals without insurance, as well as other parenting supports and resources. She expressed that her parenting knowledge and confidence increased, the program strengthened her family’s unity and communication, and the child received speech development support and other learning skills, such as books to promote early literacy and identification of colors and shapes.

*“[PPC] nos mantiene más informados. Somos más conscientes de las necesidades del desarrollo de nuestro hijo. Y también, a nosotros como padres, siento que nos mantuvo más unidos. Somos un equipo grande, pequeño.”* – Alondra, Madre

*“[PPC] keeps us more informed. We are more aware of the needs of our child’s development. And also, for us as parents, I feel like it kept us more united. We are a big, small team.”* – Alandra, Mother

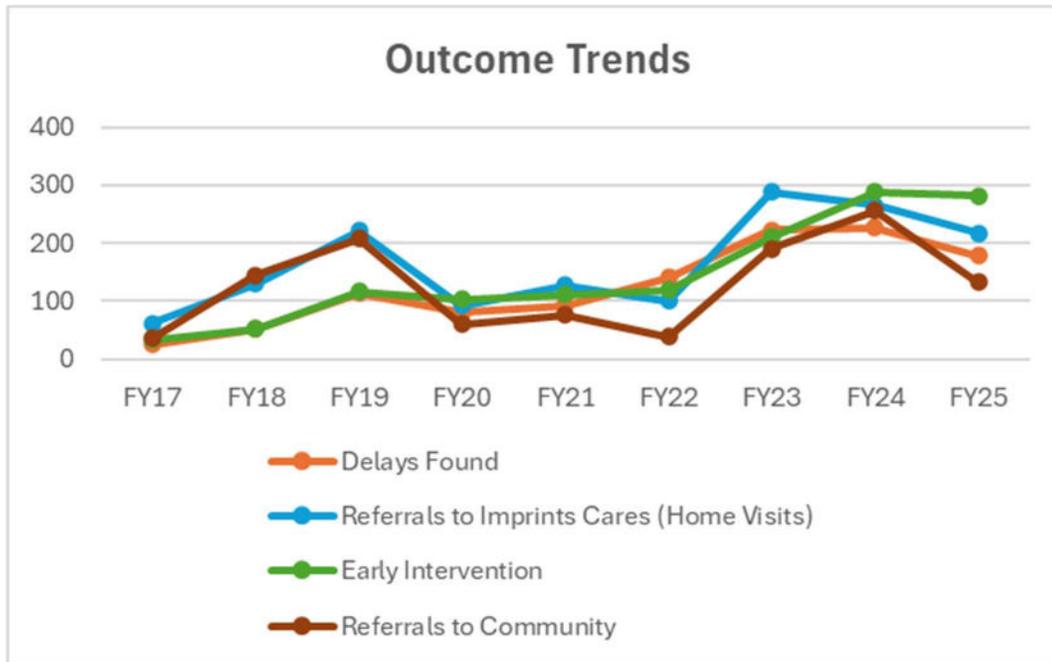


## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this case study is to increase awareness of the positive outcomes associated with the co-located evidence-based pediatric model to encourage replication and expansion, promote sustainability, and increase funding opportunities. Benefits of the model have been identified across all participants: leadership, family educators, medical staff, and caregivers. This practice has supported the development of trusting relationships, increased family engagement in referrals and services, and promoted the optimal health and well-being of families, children, and the Winston-Salem community.

Children visit the pediatrician 10 times before their second birthday; this gives doctors unique insight into which families need extra support to be the best parent they can be. The PPC program’s co-location in the medical facility creates an ideal partnership in which families are connected to the support they need, pediatricians can quickly connect families who need that support, and the Parents as Teachers program can work with the families who truly need the extra help. This support in the

critical early years of a child’s life creates a strong foundation for later success, and this symbiotic relationship allows Imprints Cares to truly nurture children, strengthen families, and build the community.



**Figure 3. Outcome Trends:** Traditionally, the number of families referred to Imprints Cares (home visits) has increased year after year with the exception of last year due to the increased waitlist for Parents as Teachers services.

*“[PPC] significantly streamlines our referrals. It also helps educate regarding many common issues with parenting, so [physicians] don’t have to spend the time doing that. It also helps make our families stronger, happier, and healthier.” – Dr. Beller, Resident at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist*

## Methodology

This case study was informed by a series of interviews and focus groups occurring in January and February 2025. These findings are informed by a total of 12 participants: three Imprints Cares leadership staff, two family educators, two caregivers, and five pediatricians. One caregiver interview was conducted in Spanish. Each interview and focus group was semi-structured and limited to one hour, and participants received the questions by email ahead of time. The two residents submitted written responses in replacement of an interview or focus group. All participants, outside of those in leadership positions, were incentivized for their participation via a \$30 electronic gift card. Each participant agreed to have their name and position included in any quotes, and they were given the opportunity to review the case study and request any changes before dissemination. Parents as Teachers National Center is thankful for the participation of these individuals and their vital role in informing the development of this material.

## **References**

1. Parents as Teachers (2024). *2023-2024 Parents as Teachers affiliate performance report summary*.
2. Linton JM, Stockton MP, Andrade B, Daniel S. Integrating Parenting Support Within and Beyond the Pediatric Medical Home. *Global Pediatric Health*. 2018;5.  
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