



# How Parents as Teachers Supports Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care

Parents as Teachers uses a relationship-based approach and home visiting delivery model to help children grow up healthy, safe, and ready to learn in all environments.

Home visiting is one approach to enhancing FFN care, and research supports the effectiveness of home visits as a method of supporting FFN care providers.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Care

Childcare provided by a family, friend, or neighbor (FFN) in an informal home setting is the most popular type of childcare in the United States.<sup>3</sup> In 2019, there were about 5 million home-based care providers throughout the United States, caring for 12 million children under the age of 13.<sup>4</sup>

FFN care is one type of home-based childcare.<sup>4</sup> Home-based childcare is defined as any care provided in a care provider's or child's home, including FFN care or care provided by licensed, registered, or certified family childcare providers.<sup>4</sup> Home-based childcare is often used by caregivers who work jobs with nontraditional hours or live in rural communities, as well as families of color, immigrant families, and families with low incomes.<sup>4</sup>

FFN care providers are exempt from licensure and may be paid or unpaid.<sup>4</sup> Unpaid providers are often older relatives caring for their grandchildren.<sup>5</sup> Paid providers are often younger, Black or Hispanic/Latinx, and have a low household income.<sup>5</sup>

Many parents prefer FFN care because of its cultural or linguistic alignment, cost, perceived safety, focused attention on their child, flexibility, and the special bonds that already exist between the care provider and child.<sup>1,4,6</sup>

## FFN Care Providers Face Challenges

Like other methods of childcare, FFN care can be a safe and affordable choice for families; however, these informal settings may not always address health and safety concerns or provide educational enrichment for children.<sup>1,7</sup>

Some FFN care providers express challenges like lack of access to resources and navigating difficult child behaviors and family dynamics.<sup>1,3</sup> Care providers may also balance childcare with challenges in their own lives, like financial difficulties or health concerns.<sup>3,5</sup>

Many FFN care providers are interested in additional training in and support with topics like discipline, challenging behavior, caring for children with special needs, and community resource connections, and they are open to learning in many formats.<sup>1</sup>



## Uplifting Children and Care Providers: Supporting Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care in Kansas

Across the country, Parents as Teachers affiliates are partnering with family, friend, and neighbor care providers during home visits.

In the Kansas City Metro area, [\*Supporting Care Providers of Kansas\*](#) has been dedicated to providing support to family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) child care providers for over two decades. Their program, which has already seen improvements in care provider skill-building and child engagement, plans to scale over the next three years.

During their visits with FFN care providers, home visitors share evidence-based activities, conduct screenings, and provide materials that encourage continued learning after the visit. They share information about the importance of play and research on topics like routines and transitions, using the Parents as Teachers [\*Supporting Care Providers Through Personal Visits curriculum\*](#).

Becky Stewart, Director at Supporting Care Providers of Kansas, and Maria Rios, Recruitment Specialist/Supporting Care Provider Educator, shared their advice for other Parents as Teachers affiliates who want to work more with FFN care providers. They emphasized understanding the importance of working with FFN care providers, especially because most children are cared for in these settings. They recommended understanding the differences between the roles of caregiver and care provider, and ensuring that different curriculum, activities, and handouts are available for both.

Their work with FFN care providers not only benefits the children but the care providers too. Maria shared a story of a grandmother who said that she had never taken time for self-care. With Maria's encouragement, the grandmother decided to start her self-care journey by going for a walk by herself. Not only did she take a new step in self-care, but she also made a new friend in her neighborhood along the walk!

Supporting Care Providers of Kansas' intentional, dedicated approach has made them a leader in working with FFN care providers and the children in their care.

## Parents as Teachers Supports FFN Care Providers and Children

Parents as Teachers provides an approach, training, and curriculum designed to engage providers in quality improvements, reduce provider isolation, increase provider access to knowledge and resources, and translate knowledge into practice. Many programs across the United States are already leveraging their existing expertise and infrastructure to offer home visits to FFN care providers, including using the Parents as Teachers [\*Supporting Care Providers Through Personal Visits curriculum\*](#).

Through its *Supporting Care Providers Through Personal Visits* curriculum, Parents as Teachers prepares care providers with critical tools to improve both the quality of care and the environment by sharing:<sup>8</sup>

- Information about child development, health, and safety
- Age-appropriate activities to impact learning and development
- Strategies for handling parent-care provider relationships and child-care provider relationships

These resources are organized into four key focus areas: Partnering with Providers, Intentional Environments and Interactions, Care Routines, and Family Engagement. Literature reviews, feedback, and experts informed the selection of these focus areas. They are also areas of interest and development for many FFN care providers. The curriculum is based on an evidence-based theoretical framework, centered in the Parents as Teachers approach of partnering, facilitating, and reflecting.

The *Supporting Care Providers Through Personal Visits* curriculum includes support with developing provider skills, like observation and self-awareness, learning developmentally appropriate provider behaviors, communicating with families, and other topics essential to providing quality childcare. Home visitors tailor each visit to the specific strengths, areas of interest, and circumstances of the care provider.

A study by Cornell University found that home-based care provider visits using the Parents as Teachers curriculum significantly increased the quality of care they offered, including:<sup>9</sup>

- Increasing overall quality of the care setting
- Improving children's language and reasoning skills
- Increasing children's social development

*Supporting Care Providers Through Personal Visits* is used throughout the country by programs providing home visits to care providers. Parents as Teachers partners with FFN care providers to support children's optimal early development, learning, and health.





## From Playgroups to Home Visits: Supporting Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care in California

Parents as Teachers affiliates continue to expand their programs to FFN care providers, recognizing the importance of these care providers in children's lives.

In Monterey County, California, [\*Door to Hope\*](#) has more recently started offering home visits to FFN care providers. Door to Hope is the largest local agency providing FFN services across Greenfield, King City, and Gonzales, California, three cities that are 88-96% Latinx. Each year, they serve about 20-22 FFN care providers, who care for around 30 children.

Initially, Door to Hope started by hosting playgroups, but they saw an opportunity to add personal visits to better address families' experiences and challenges. With the support of their funder, United Way, they expanded to offer home visits to families and FFN care providers, while continuing to offer playgroups as a recruitment and referral avenue. Door to Hope cited Supporting Care Providers of Kansas as an important partner in helping them start this work.

One aspect of their visits is helping FFN care providers navigate the unique nature of their role. Especially since many FFN care providers care for children who are related to them, conversations with the children's parents about topics like concerns about the child's development or caregiving time commitments can be sensitive. Home visitors support FFN care providers with these conversations, boundaries to prioritize their own well-being, and relationships with the children's parents.

Denise Jaime, FFN Coordinator and Parent Educator at Door to Hope, shared that goal setting was an essential component to their visits. Home visitors work with FFN care providers to set goals together, which allows home visitors to intentionally tailor visits to meet specific needs. Setting these goals can reduce FFN care providers' sense of overwhelm, helping them to clarify where they can make an impact and how best to do so.

Denise also highlighted the importance of validating the work of FFN care providers. Denise reflected on these central goals - "How can we support FFN [providers] so that they feel important in raising these children? And how do we support the environment that they have, the knowledge that they have in child development?"

Thanks to this important work, FFN care providers in their community are empowered with new skills and abilities to connect with the children in their care.

If you have had success with supporting care providers in your community, we'd love to [hear your story!](#)

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