

Advocacy and accurate reporting are crucial to the future of public funding and Parents as Teachers programs

By Kate Doyle

Kate Doyle spent her summer as a public policy intern at the Parents as Teachers national office. She is currently receiving her master's in Public Policy Administration at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

MOST PARENTS AS TEACHERS PROGRAMS, LIKE THE majority of nonprofits, rely on public funding to operate. This makes public funding crucial to Parents as Teachers programs. There are primarily new and recurring funding opportunities available and it is important for programs to not only be aware of them, but understand where they fit and take advantage of as many as possible.

Three examples of both current and future federal opportunities are the Promise Neighborhoods Fund, the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge fund, and the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program. Programs such as these will help Parents as Teachers programs across the country expand services.

Promise Neighborhoods Fund

This competitive grant is open to eligible organizations, including nonprofits. The fund seeks to considerably improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children in troubled communities by creating a pipeline of services within a neighborhood. Home visitation programs like Parents as Teachers are a critical component to providing comprehensive services in a cradle-to-career system.

Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge

This fund is a \$500 million opportunity. States can apply for competitive grants to support and improve early learning and development programs for young children. With an emphasis on both promotion of school readiness and child development, Parents as Teachers has the opportunity to be a vital part of state plans.

Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program

This program provides support for the development and expansion of evidence-based home visitation services in at-risk communities through formula and competitive grants. This five-year program offers direct support for providing

Parents as Teachers services to at-risk children and families. Currently, 25 states and one territory have chosen to implement the Parents as Teachers model through these resources.

The crucial need for public funding opportunities throughout the country is why Parents as Teachers devotes resources and support to our public policy and advocacy work at both the state and federal level. However, this work does not stop at the national office. **Each and every program should not only realize the critical need for advocacy, but should engage in the process by becoming active in local and state initiatives and building relationships with your elected officials at the federal, state and local levels.** A good way to do this is to invite an elected official on a home visit. This way, Parents as Teachers programs can have an active voice in shaping early learning policies.

Another way to ensure that early learning funding opportunities remain available is accurate data reporting. The national office cannot properly advocate for our programs without understanding their needs. **It is extremely important for programs to accurately report not only their data through the Affiliate Performance Report, but also where their funding comes from—a very key point of interest for public policy decision-makers.**

Questions about where your funding comes from? More resources are currently being made available through our Web site to better help you understand the public funding process.

For more information, visit www.ParentsAsTeachers.org/advocacy.