



Six Ways to Teach Children the Meaning of Christmas

This time of the year is filled with excitement and holiday cheer! Children grow accustomed to associating the intention of the holiday season with the symbolic Christmas tree, lights, decorations, and gifts that abound, but for some children and families, these tangible Christmas staples may not be possible due to a variety of reasons.

Begin introducing lessons of love, community, service, and presence into the lives of children at an early age (without breaking beliefs or family traditions, of course). We talked with parents and young adults about the meaning of Christmas and how to provide a deeper social and emotional understanding of the season of giving to children. Here is what they had to say:

1. Provide consistency for kids. Having something to anticipate every year builds traditions and breaks the obsession of list-making and “wanting” the newest toy or fad. Make your own family traditions. After all, years from now, it is not the gifts we remember. Rather, we recall things we did as a family. This might mean baking cookies, making homemade cards for neighbors, or watching a special Christmas movie!



2. Keep it real. Be very mindful about telling children what Santa provided. Many children will receive more needs-based gifts, like clothing, socks, hats, and gloves. Families cannot always buy high-end devices, trending toys, or the latest sneaker release. Don't sabotage the spirit of Christmas for other children and caregivers by giving Santa too much credit.

3. Help children set realistic expectations and maintain perspective about gifts. It is in a child's natural spirit to look forward to having their hopes and wishes met when it comes to presents; however, it's very important to introduce limits and lessons of gratitude at all ages. In age-appropriate discussions, educate children on what Santa can and cannot afford, what he is able to provide, and how there may be disappointment if we expect all the toys and gifts we want to arrive.

4. Be intentional about time and schedules. All children need time that provides relaxed attention. Throughout the holiday season, beginning with Thanksgiving and typically wrapping sometime in the new year, life becomes hustle-bustle, with parties, shopping, and visits from house to house. Carve out meaningful time to slow down, turn down the

volume, and focus on quality time. Children tend to pull a lot of their content and ideals from processes and behaviors they witness from others. Give yourself and your children the gift of mindfulness!

5. Introduce acts of service. Getting kids involved in true giving helps broaden the focus of the season. Removing commercial messaging from the holiday begins with acts of kindness and consideration of others. Consider taking children to a retirement community to pass out cards and cookies or visit with residents. Allow children to accompany you to food drives, meal kitchens, or gift packing events for other kids. By engaging children in service work, you show the value of demonstrating consideration of others, a gift that lasts a lifetime.

6. Embrace and attend to your own inner child. As adults, we tend to get all worked up around the holidays. Sometimes we are so focused on cooking, cleaning, packing, shipping, and buying that by the end of the month, we have lost the experience of Christmas altogether. Consider slowing down, dressing comfortably, and making homemade gifts with your children for your loved ones. The gifts of time, kindness, and presence are most valuable – and will never go out of style!

Trainer Spotlight: Candace Shoenberger

We are excited to introduce Candace as a PFSA-contracted trainer!



Candace Shoenberger has been involved in the child welfare field for the past eleven years, specializing in permanency services. She is currently Allegheny County's Families for Teens training coordinator, working to provide staff training and program development to agencies contracted to Allegheny County Children, Youth and Families. Prior to her current position, she worked as a permanency specialist, providing SWAN services to children and youth in the child welfare system. Candace has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Messiah College. She is also an adoptive mother of four children and uses her experiences to inform her training. Candace has been a trainer for PA Family Support Alliance since fall 2018.



LEAVE A LASTING GIFT

Have you made your will yet, or are you ready to update it? Please remember PFSA and the children who need our protection. To include PFSA in your plan, contact Ann Moffitt, ACFRE, Director of Development at 1-800-448-4906 or amoffitt@pa-fsa.org.



End-of-Year Message

From Our Director of Prevention Programs

As the end of the year draws near, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for an amazing year. The success of PA Family Support Alliance is based on the relationships we've built through the years, and we wouldn't be where we are without you. Over this past year, we have added staff, trainers, and new members who are all like family to us. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with and for you.

This year has been filled with a multitude of both challenges and victories. Every year is different, but 2019 has brought more change than usual. The world is evolving quickly, and the work we do has to change along with it.

Looking back over the past 12 months, I can honestly say it's been incredible to see the amazing things we have all accomplished. There are long days and even longer nights. Some weeks, we see more of our co-workers and clients than we do our own families, and it is reassuring to see how each of us continues to serve Pennsylvania families.

Working together this past year has been a pleasure, and we're proud to have you all as our partners. As the end of 2019 approaches, we know there will be many challenges ahead, but we are so excited for all that 2020 has in store.

I know there isn't a stronger, brighter, or more passionate network out there, and I am humbled to work with all of you.

Best wishes and happiness to you and your families during this festive season. We at PFSA look forward to a meaningful, impactful, and successful 2020!

Best wishes for the holiday season.

Sincerely,

Adam Smith



LEGISLATION UPDATE: *Changes to Clearances for Employees Having Contact with Children!*

Starting January 1, 2020, Act 47 of 2019 will require all employees having contact with children to obtain criminal background checks and the Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance prior to beginning employment.

The change eliminates the ability for agencies and organizations to hire employees on a 90-day provisional basis, affecting those who applied but are still waiting for clearance results. This ensures that those who have contact with children meet state and federal requirements while also increasing the safety of environments where children are served.

The federal Family First Prevention Services Act still requires all adults who work in childcare settings who receive Title IV-E funding to obtain child abuse clearances even if they are not working directly with children.

If needed, childcare centers, group childcare homes, and family childcare homes can request a waiver to hire an employee on a provisional basis for no longer than 45 days. Approved waivers will not allow the new employee to work alone with children; these new employees must be in the immediate vicinity of a permanent employee until all required clearances are received. The waiver and instructions will be on the Keep Kids Safe website in the near future.

CBCAP Statewide Network Links PA Parents and Caregivers to Support and Resources



If you are a parent or caregiver in need of supports like parenting groups, recovery support groups, a referral to food and clothing pantries, shelter services, and community-based resources, PFSA can help.

Our Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) network members include family service providers, treatment professionals, family centers, and advocacy agencies committed to strengthening families and keeping kids safe.

If you are struggling to find support in your community, reach out to us today, and we will link you to resources closest to your neighborhood. It takes a village to help grow strong parents and safe children, and PFSA is here to help.

PFSA would like to thank all our CBCAP members for the work they do to #ProtectPAKids and the role they play in strengthening and supporting families in Pennsylvania.

PFSA Welcomes New Board Members



► **KARI KING** of the PA Partnerships for Children joins us and brings a strong background in public policy for health and wellness.



► **MARCI LESKO** of the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley joins us and offers an understanding of organizational strategy, capacity, and integration solutions.



► **KATHLEEN MCGRAW** of Hershey Entertainment and Resorts joins us and provides essential experience in public and community relations.

UPCOMING TRAINING

Mandated Reporter Train-the-Trainer Program

For curriculum titled "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse"

This is an opportunity for organizations to develop their own quality, cost-efficient, in-house training program for employees on child abuse recognition and reporting. With the three-year contract, PFSA provides two days of initial instruction for approved applicants, reports CEs directly to the PA Departments of State and Education, and offers ongoing technical assistance.

COST

\$1,000 per trainer entering into a 3-year contract with PFSA

(Payment can be broken down by year: \$400/year one, \$300/year two, and \$300/year three.)

DATES

February 4 & 5, 2020 • 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. both days with a one-hour lunch break
Turning Points for Children • Philadelphia, PA

REGISTER

You must pre-register for this training by going to pa-fsa.org/calendar and filling out the webform for the training you want to attend. You will receive a confirmation email once your registration has been processed, which will include the address for the training location.

First Families in Recovery Train-The-Trainer Program

Join Us for Our First Cohort of 2020!

PFSA will host another TTT session for agencies and organizations interested in bringing the *Families in Recovery: Strengthening Connections One Day at a Time* program to their community! This research-based and trauma-informed program is a valuable resource to caregivers and parents at any stage of the recovery process. If you are a service provider who reaches parents or families touched by substance use disorder, this social-emotional parenting support and education curriculum will flexibly complement and strength your program delivery. Benefits of the program package include ongoing, unlimited program coaching, technical support, refresher trainings, communications and PR support, and program implementation assistance.

COST

\$3,035 per trainer entering into a 3-year contract with PFSA

(Payment can be broken down by year: \$1,035/year one, \$1,000/year two, and \$1,000/year three.)

CBCAP network members receive a 10% discount on all program-related costs.

DATES

February 6 & 7, 2020 • 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
PFSA offices • Harrisburg

REGISTER

For more information and to register, please visit our website at pa-fsa.org/Calendar or speak directly to the program developer by calling us at 717-238-0937.