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## Family Paths Along The Way eNewsletter

*Family Paths promotes the development of nurturing, responsible and resilient families within our diverse communities by providing comprehensive services that foster positive change, empowering parents and children.*

### Greetings From Our Executive Director

Family Paths, Inc. has been at the forefront of efforts to curb and treat trauma related violence in families for over 36 years. We look at violence in two specific contexts. First, there is the community violence we all face. Crime rates are on the rise throughout Alameda County. I'm sure you've all seen the numbers. As of the beginning of July there had been 68 murders in Oakland alone. Second, there is the violence in the home, within the family. At Family Paths we see and address the clear relationship between violence in the family and violence in the broader community.



While Alameda County crime rates overall are known to be high, we also have one of the highest rates of reported child abuse and neglect cases for all counties statewide (CA Department of Social Services, Statistical Service Bureau). In 2004 over 20,000 reports of child abuse and neglect were made in our county. It is not simply coincidence that rates of community violence and abuse are both high.

Family Paths has a long history of treating children who are victims of abuse or neglect and that focus is at the core of our mission. We have created a two-pronged approach to combating violence by treating the victim while at the same time intervening with the parent or care-provider to stop the unhealthy behaviors and learn healthier ways to communicate. We see supporting parents as vital to interrupting the cycle of violence that results in trauma abuse or neglect. We start with the assumption that all parents *want* to be good parents, they want to do their best but sometimes they don't have the tools, skills or knowledge to make effective changes. That is where our Parent Education program steps in. Our Parent Educators support and guide parents in learning new ways of being with their children. They give them the skills to interact with their children in healthy, respectful and nurturing ways. Our Educators understand that

while a parent may have made unwise choices in the past, that same person, given a different range of options to choose from, may shine as a loving and thoughtful parent.

Another vital support service for parents is through our 24/7 hotline. Whether through the 24-Hour Family Support and Resource Line or the 24-Hour Foster Parent Advice Line, people are available around the clock for parents who need to talk. Our counselors provide nurturance, support and guidance to parents and caregivers and, in a sense, model the kind of support parents will ideally provide their children.

In partnership with our Parent Educators and our Hotline Counselors, our mental health counselors and therapists work with family members to interrupt the behaviors that, quite likely, were learned when the parents were children themselves. They address the emotional and mental health issues related to trauma and abuse both with the parents and the children.

Long-term effects of child abuse on the individual, and society as a whole, continue to unfold. Depression, suicide, violent behavior patterns, delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse and various forms of criminality are frequently related to child abuse. Adults who have experienced childhood abuse often find it difficult to build trusting relationships, maintain employment and parent their own children effectively. In short, they are robbed of reaching their potential. We focus on the prevention of all forms of child abuse by providing mental health services that will ensure the growth and development of children and families. All children deserve a consistent, healthy home environment to enhance their potential in life regardless of socioeconomic background. And Family Paths works to help parents provide a safe and healthy home.

## Our Families In Transition Team Is Growing

Our Hayward office is gearing up for some major changes. In September Family Paths will begin the process of expanding two of our programs: Families in Transition (FIT) and Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH). We have been granted increased funding from Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services through EPSDT funding. This increase will allow us to bring in 6 new clinicians, a Program Manager and a part-time Clinical Supervisor. It also means we will be able to serve more than 125 additional clients every year. In Hayward our greatest need right now is for bi-lingual, Spanish speaking clinicians. We will begin the process of recruiting and screening candidates very soon.



This planned expansion of our services is directly related to the problems of violence challenging our communities. Families and children are confronted every day with the fall-out from violence. Living in a violent area can increase stress and decrease safety in general. For children and families there are specific stressors that come with witnessing or living with violence.

Traumatic experiences are difficult to deal with for both parents and children. Parents may feel helpless to protect their families or may simply feel increased anxiety in their day-to-day lives. Children may experience

night terrors, regression to an earlier developmental stage, or even show violent behavior themselves.

Family Paths is here to help navigate this difficult and often frightening world. Whether violence and trauma are occurring in the home or the community, we can help. Our programs help clients deal with the impact of violence and the trauma that comes with it. Our services are designed to provide children, parents, caregivers and foster-parents the tools and knowledge that will help them heal and become stronger families.

## 24 Hour Support & Resource Line Volunteer Training

The Family Support Program staff is eagerly preparing for another invigorating and rewarding Pre-Service Training for community members seeking to volunteer as a hotline counselor at Family Paths. It will be held two weekends starting September 19, 2008.

We do not require that you have any previous hotline, counseling, or parenting experience. The training will prepare you to confidently answer the line. It is important to have good communication skills, the capacity to listen openly and to respond non-judgmentally; as well as a strong interest in helping to support children and families. Volunteer phone counselors serve a minimum of 4 hours per week.

Our pre-service training prepares volunteers to provide callers the support and resources they need. Topics covered include: phone counseling, family dynamics, positive parenting, multiculturalism, substance abuse, domestic violence, crisis intervention, child abuse, alternative families, and more.

After successfully completing training, volunteers work one regularly-scheduled shift per week, in our Oakland office, between the hours of 9 AM-9 PM, Monday through Friday, and are asked for a minimum commitment of 9 months as a volunteer. Volunteers work as part of a team in a supportive environment including on-the-job mentoring and supervision.

If you are interested in joining us in September, please contact Vincenza Baldino to request an application at (510) 893-9230 ext. 244 or via email at [vbaldino@familypaths.org](mailto:vbaldino@familypaths.org). Thank you for your interest in volunteering at Family Paths.

## Tips On Preparing Your Children For The School Year

The end of summer is coming and so is the start of the new school year. This can be a difficult time for parents and for children. Children can have a particularly hard time when it's a new school. We have a few suggestions that can help your make an easier transition back to school.

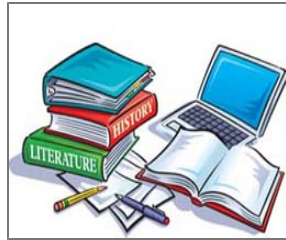
### **Organization is a life saver!**

Every year kids come home with calendars, schedules and rosters. Set up a central area where everything is kept. This can be a large envelope, or if

you have several children in several schools, you might want to use an accordion file with multiple pockets. You could have a separate section for each child or for different topics – class rosters, permission slips, lunch menus, etc.

**Organize time too.**

Use a large calendar to keep track of play dates, after-school activities, field-trips, etc. You can use a different color for each member of the family so that tracking who needs to be where and when is faster and easier.



**Set up a regular routine.**

Children respond well to having a set routine. It helps them to stay organized and focused. It also helps them feel successful; they know what to do when and have the feeling of accomplishment that goes with learning new skills. A chore chart that a child can check off gives a visual reminder of tasks and accomplishments. Setting a

schedule for the day can help too. Include bed time, homework, wake-up time, anything that your child does on a regular basis – include daily, weekly and monthly appointments and tasks as a reminder for both of you.

**Planning ahead makes life so much easier.**

Homework can be one of the biggest challenges for parents and kids when school starts up again. How parents approach it can affect how kids feel about it. If you are encouraging and involved they are more likely to feel good about their work. One way to make it easier on both parents and students is to create time and space for homework– literally. Scheduling in homework time is a great first step but creating a space for homework can be a huge help too. No matter how small or large your home, it's possible to create a space that helps kids study. Even if you need to have a TV tray that is the designated study space – make room for homework!

**Put it all together.**

Once you have the organization in place you can work on preparation. Identify a place where kids drop their books, backpacks, lunch boxes, gym bags every day when they come in. This will make preparing for the next day much easier. It's a good way to avoid that last minute hunt for the library book that has to go back. Help kids make sure that everything they need for the next day is ready and in its assigned spot the night before. This will make your life easier as well as theirs. And what parent doesn't need an easier morning routine?

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